



## **Teachers Testify in Support of Bill to Increase Qualifications and Raise Starting Salary**

***Currently, Maine has the 41<sup>st</sup> lowest teacher salary in the nation, and is more than \$7,000 behind average pay in the New England Region***

An Act to Improve the Quality of Teachers, LD 818, will be heard in the Education Committee on **Wednesday, May 3<sup>rd</sup> at 9 a.m.** The bill sets a high standard for soon-to-be teachers entering the profession by increasing the mandatory hands-on exposure to the classroom for college students and increasing the grade point average a student must receive in order to graduate and receive a teaching certificate.

The bill also increases the minimum salary for certified teachers to \$40,000 beginning with the 2018-2019 school year and includes in the school funding formula state funding for the incremental costs of meeting this minimum beginning in fiscal year 2018-19. The proposed increase comes at a time when many younger educators are questioning if they can afford to continue to be teachers.

“In order to supplement my salary of \$32,000 a year, I work a second job as a bartender on the weekends,” said Nate Petersen a social studies teacher at Hermon High School. “Every Saturday, from 11 am until 1am, I spend half of my weekend pouring beer so I can pay my mortgage and student loans. During basketball and soccer season, I hold a third job as a middle school coach. While I do enjoy my other jobs, the time I spend working at the bar and coaching takes away from time I could be spending to improve my craft or further help my students. There is no doubt in my mind that my students deserve more time and energy from me. Now, at 31, I am at a point where I am ready to get married and have children. Yet, to start a family of my own while juggling three jobs would be both irresponsible and impossible,” added Petersen.

Attracting highly educated college students to the teaching profession is crucial the future of education in Maine. Nearly 35% of teachers in Maine schools are approaching retirement, with the state currently experiencing teacher shortages in eight academic disciplines or subject matters. In 2016-17, teacher shortages existed in English as a Second language, Gifted/Talented, Industrial Arts, Mathematics, School Librarians, Science, Special Education and World Languages. For perspective, in 1990-92 Maine experienced teacher shortages in just Special Education for Handicapped Children in grades K-12.

“Teachers understand when they enter the profession they won’t strike it rich. People become teachers because teaching is a calling. But, that calling shouldn’t be an excuse to pay teachers an unfair salary. In order to attract and retain the best quality teachers for our students we as a state need to step up and let educators know they are respected, and that comes with increasing the starting teacher salary,” said Lois Kilby-Chesley, Maine Education Association President.

**To see a video created by The Teacher Salary Project regarding teacher pay watch [Nate's Story](#).**

**To see the full bill: [An Act to Improve the Quality of Teachers](#)**