

The Maine Heritage Policy Center Testimony to Oppose LD 1338 "An Act To Protect Teachers from Unfair Evaluations"

Senator Millett, Representative Kornfield and distinguished members of the Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs, my name is Adam Crepeau and I am a policy analyst at The Maine Heritage Policy Center. Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in opposition to LD 1338.

The title of this bill implies that teachers are currently subject to unfair evaluations. According to the Maine Department of Education, the details of model elements on the state's website for teacher evaluations "are a synthesis of research, conversations, listening and critical review by experts, stakeholders and practitioners in the field."¹ In addition, the educator effectiveness rating considers professional practice and student growth as measures of effectiveness.² If students are not growing in the classroom, they would not be gaining tangible benefits from going to school.

The Maine Heritage Policy Center believes parents, students and taxpayers receive the best results when teachers are retained based on their effectiveness. This bill would nix the requirement to use teachers' effectiveness ratings as a factor in deciding the order of layoff and recall. Despite this, it leaves seniority as a factor in the decision-making process. Is evaluating teachers based on seniority fairer than evaluating them on their effectiveness? When the education of Maine's children is on the line and funding is limited, we need to ensure taxpayer dollars are spent wisely and selectively on the best teachers.

Teacher effectiveness ratings were codified in state statute in the 125th legislature to give school administrators a method to track teacher performance in the classroom.³ By striking the use of the effectiveness rating for layoffs and recalls, it would allow school districts to use criteria that is not in the best interest of students. In addition, by making it optional instead of mandatory for superintendents to use teacher effectiveness ratings as a factor to inform human capital decisions, we would be losing accountability in our public school system. This lack of accountability would likely have an adverse effect on education and student outcomes. The language in Chapter 508 was put in place with the interests of students in mind, not whether or not teachers and their union would like the outcome.

While we do not disagree with providing an avenue for teachers to appeal their evaluations, it would be irresponsible to eliminate the effectiveness ratings from the aforementioned decision-making processes. In sum, this bill would be unfair to children in the state of Maine.

For those reasons, The Maine Heritage Policy Center urges the committee to vote, "Ought Not to Pass" on LD 1338. Thank you.

¹ <https://www.maine.gov/doe/educators/educatoreval/educator>

² <https://www.mainelegislature.org/legis/statutes/20-A/title20-Asec13704.html>

³ <https://bangordailynews.com/2012/03/14/politics/lepages-teacher-evaluation-bill-hits-legislature-to-mixed-reviews/>