



The Honorable Senator Brian Langley, Representative Tori Kornfield and members of the 127th Maine Education and Cultural Affairs Committee:

We, the undersigned Maine Teachers of the Year, urge your committee to “stay the course” with proficiency based education and vote *ought not to pass* **LD 579 "An Act To Allow Teachers To Teach and Students To Learn by Amending the Laws Governing Education Standards"**

This bill is inadvisable. This bill dismisses the time, effort and resources educators have committed to designing local curriculum and putting systems in place preparing our students for this transition to a learner-centered instructional system. In 2012 the 126th Maine Legislature passed the proficiency based graduation law (LD 1422). At that time, teachers across the state welcomed the passage of this law because it meant that finally there was a long-term education plan in place for Maine, a defined path forward for students, educators and parents. In essence, it meant relief because it is difficult to hit an ever-moving target.

Repealing LD 1422 would send a message that decisions are not made based on what is *best for our students*. And that is the lens by which this decision should be made. Proficiency based education is the best path forward for Maine students. Maine should continue implementing the system for many reasons.

First, the goal of proficiency-based education is two-fold: to close the achievement gap in Maine and to close the opportunity gap by holding all students to high expectations connected to Maine's Learning Results. Maine's standards and the current law ensure that regardless of the community in which you live, all of Maine's learners will receive a standards-based education.

Second, a proficiency-based diploma represents K-12 learning. As we build a standards-based model of education, we are creating layers of learning that ultimately guide students to a proficiency-based diploma.

Third, research shows that feedback specific to a learning goal increases achievement. Instead of a time-based model that focuses on courses and covering material, a standards-based model focuses on the actual learning, not just the material that is covered or introduced by the teacher. The learner is at the center of a proficiency-based system. A proficiency-based system requires quality instruction driven by standards and rooted in formative assessment. In our letter grading system, it's impossible to tell which standards a child met with proficiency. This route of measurement is certainly more informative than our traditional letter-grade system.

Fourth, a proficiency-based diploma certifies that standards have been met that students are prepared for college or career because it makes transparent to all stakeholders what a student knows and is able to do.

And finally (because it bears repeating), a proficiency-based diploma, connected to consistent, rigorous standards ensures equal learning opportunities for all learners in our state.

Again, we urge you to stay the course and focus on examining ways to improve the current statutory requirements. Proficiency-based education is individualized learning, but our schools need time to change their structure to meet the needs of a proficiency-based system. For example, how are schools to ensure students in

special education are considered and treated fairly as diplomas are conferred? How are schools to ensure students with disabilities have access to authentic opportunities, greater investment and accessibility to technical schools?

Again, Maine's Teachers of the Year urge you to stay the course. Vote LD 579 Ought Not To Pass.

Thank you for your consideration of our testimony in your decision-making. Your commitment to education and all that you do for Maine students is appreciated. We stand ready to help you in any way we can. Please call upon us.

Sincerely,

Jeff Bailey, 2014 Oxford County Teacher of the Year
Sarah Brokofsky, 2014 Cumberland County Teacher of the Year
Cory Chase, 2014 Lincoln County Teacher of the Year
Dan Crocker, 2014 Kennebec County Teacher of the Year
Gordon "Skip" Crosby, 2014 Sagadahoc County Teacher of the Year
Jennifer Dorman, 2014 Somerset County Teacher of the Year, 2015 Maine Teacher of the Year
Phyllis Frkuska-Heeren, 2014 Waldo County Teacher of the Year
Sherri Gould, 2005 Maine Teacher of the Year
Vicki Grotton, 2014 Penobscot County Teacher of the Year
Karen MacDonald, 2014 Maine Teacher of the Year
Dorothy Maxwell, 1994 Maine Teacher of the Year
Shelly Moody, 2011 Maine Teacher of the Year
Bill Nave, 1990 Maine Teacher of the Year
Kate Smith, 2014 York County Teacher of the Year
Kristi Todd, 2014 Knox County Teacher of the Year