

Testimony to the Joint Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs

LD 1422, An Act to Prepare Maine People for the Future Economy

Senator Langley, Representative Richardson and Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs:

My name is Gloria Noyes. I am a 5th grade teacher at Congin Elementary School in Westbrook, as well as a member of the Board of Directors of the Maine Coalition for Excellence in Education, and in 2009, I was honored as Maine's Teacher of the Year. However, most importantly, I am the parent of two wonderful school aged sons.

It is with this background and perspective that I come here today to urge your support for **LD 1422, An Act to Prepare Maine People for the Future Economy.**

When I reviewed this proposed legislation my first thought was that this is a massive undertaking and as a practitioner I started thinking 'can we do this?' And then I resolved – we don't have a choice.

This proposed legislation is not about improving test scores. This is about ensuring that all children are learning.

For the benefit of the LEARNERS, we need to establish clear benchmarks and targets. Nothing focuses the mind like a deadline. Furthermore, we need to commit to stop moving the targets... so that students and EDUCATORS have a clear understanding of the path forward and parents and families know how to navigate the system. Therein lies the importance of having a strategic plan for education in Maine. We need a plan that transcends elections, administrations, commissioners, turf issues and focuses on the academic needs of our learners and the economic needs of our state.

Keep in mind that my area of expertise is elementary education. However, I want to be clear that I see my role in elementary education as part of the continuum.

- High quality Pre-school experiences impact learning at all levels.
- Ensuring that all children are proficient in reading by the end of third grade trumps the other barriers that they may face – including poverty. It is a gateway to success.

- The all-important middle level years will be better served with the provision called for in this proposed legislation for personal learning plans. This is an important step in getting these middle school students ready for success in high school and beyond. My colleague, Shelly Moody the 2010 Maine Teacher of the Year, is submitting testimony to you on this bill and she will elaborate on this topic. In Shelly's classroom she works with each of her students and their parents to develop personal/individual-learning plans. These are goal based learning plans tailored to the specific academic needs of each child. Having to update the personal learning plan each year with the students and teachers is a great way to engage parents and to help the parents understand their role and responsibility in their child's education.
- When it comes to a standards-based diploma. I think we all know that it is long past due. There are districts already doing this. Again, it is not about improving test scores (or measuring seat time) it is about ensuring that students graduate prepared for success beyond high school.

As a proud 5th grade teacher, I am so focused on my own students and classroom that I don't always think about how my work relates to that of the high school calculus teacher or the professor at UMaine teaching freshman English. But it clearly does – and that is why we need a coordinated approach to education so there are clear expectations and we are working together rather than at odds competing for scarce dollars.

LD 1422 is a major undertaking and requires a lot of commitment from all stakeholders. But, as I tell my 5th graders....we can do it...if we work together. I urge you to support LD 1422.

Thank you.

Gloria Noyes

Mom to Isaac and Max

5th Grade Teacher – Congin Elementary

2009 Maine Teacher of the Year

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