

Testimony to the Joint Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs

LD No. 817, An Act Concerning Teacher Salaries

April 6, 2009

Representative Sutherland, Senator Alford, Members of the Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs:

I am Peter Geiger, Chair of the Maine Coalition for Excellence in Education and Lewiston businessman. I am submitting this testimony in **opposition of LD 817**.

I am concerned that this proposed legislation is ill-conceived and represents a shot gun approach to outlawing what has the potential to transform public education in Maine and enhance the role of teachers in improving student performance.

Just recently, Weston Bonney, a member of the Coalition Board, testified in favor of LD 522 **Resolve 522, To Establish the Study Committee Regarding Teachers' Compensation**, stating that "how Maine compensates its teachers and how much they are paid is fundamental to the success of our education system. Having the right teachers in the right place at the right time is necessary if all students are to graduate from high school having mastered the Learning Results Standards that are currently required by law."

Banning outright the opportunity to "base teachers' salaries upon measurable performance or productivity of the teacher or the students of the teacher" certainly seems hasty in view of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act that will make available millions of dollars in the second round of stimulus money for "other education investments, including pay for performance, data systems, teacher quality investments,"

<http://www.ed.gov/print/policy/gen/leg/recovery/factsheet/overview.html>.

Pay for performance, merit pay, value added growth models of compensation for teachers **are not new concepts**. There are proven alternatives and examples of successful initiatives – some right here in Maine. You have the opportunity, through the study committee proposed in LD 522, to thoroughly examine and create an innovative compensation model for the State of Maine – and take advantage of the stimulus money to help us do it well.

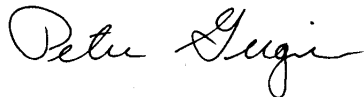
The current uniform teacher salary schedule is archaic in its intent and design. I contend that having in place such a lock-step compensation system is de-motivating and unrealistic. If we expect to attract and retain the best and brightest to teach our children (***and we must***) we must recognize that school districts will be competing with banks, engineering firms, research facilities, etc. for the same potential employees. There is a workforce crisis looming in our future – and it would be shortsighted to further exacerbate the situation with ill conceived legislation such as LD 817. I have had conversations with classroom teachers who acknowledge that some teachers are

more effective or skilled than others, and should be rewarded for those capabilities. Performance can be measured.

It is time for Maine to develop collaboratively a fair compensation system for educators that rewards outstanding performance, that improves student learning, is attractive to college graduates, and uses our resources to support the goals we have for public education in Maine.

To that end we strongly urge you to vote **ought not to pass on LD 817** and use LD 522 as the vehicle to craft a system of compensation that makes sense for the 21st century. The Maine Coalition for Excellence in Education stands ready to assist as you move forward. Please contact me or our Program Director, Dolly Sullivan at 469-3231 if you want more information.

Sincerely,



Peter Geiger, MCEE Chair

Resources:

<http://www.cgp.upenn.edu/th.html> (Professor Theodore Hershberg, – growth model expert)

Education Commission of the States:

<http://www.ecs.org/html/issueSection.asp?print=true&issueID=129&subIssueID=78&ssID=0&s=What+States+Are+Doing>

U.S. Department of Education pamphlet “Lessons Learned About Implementing Performance Based Pay”.

<http://www.ed.gov/admins/tchrqual/performance/pay-performance.pdf>

This comparison chart is in the above mentioned chart:

Traditional Compensation Systems

- Do **not** link directly to student performance
- Do **not** provide rewards for elevated levels of school or teacher effectiveness
- Do **not** encourage the continued professional development of teachers and principals
- Do **not** provide impetus for schools and districts to align their resources with their core goals
- Do **not** encourage schools to consider how to assess student learning effectively across multiple grades and subject areas
- Do **not** help schools and districts attract and retain highly effective teachers and administrators

Performance-Based Compensation Systems

- **Do** link directly to student performance
- **Do** provide rewards for elevated levels of school or teacher effectiveness
- **Do** encourage the continued professional development of teachers and principals
- **Do** provide impetus for schools and districts to align their resources with their core goals
- **Do** help schools and districts attract and retain highly effective teachers and administrators
- **Do** encourage schools to consider how to assess student learning effectively across multiple grades and subject areas