Maine Library
association

Dear Senator Millett, Representative Kornfield, and Members of the Committee,

We are writing on behalf of the Maine Library Association to register our opposition of LD-589.

We find the point "introducing any controversial subject matter that is not germane to the topic of the course being taught;" to be quite problematic and vague. The bill goes on to define "controversial issue" as an issue that is a point made in an electoral party platform at the local, state or federal level.

For instance, the Maine Democratic Party platform specifically mentions climate change, social justice and many other important topics which could then be labeled as controversial. According to the bill, the teacher would then have to provide students with materials supporting both sides of these controversial issues. How will science teachers teach about climate change? Do they have to share the view of climate change deniers? What if there were a candidate who supports white supremacy? Would this then make that a controversial issue and teachers would have to provide materials for and against that issue? What about Holocaust deniers? Do teachers need treat this as a possible truth?

As librarians, we believe that students should be exposed to various points of view. However not every "controversial" issue deserves all aspects to be explored. Teachers should be respected as professionals to fairly cover topics in the curriculum.

As we are sure you will hear from many teachers and educators in Maine there already are policies around this at the local level. Most school departments have policies that direct teachers to avoid taking positions when teaching controversial issues.

Isn't a classroom the place where students should be learning how to engage in debate and explore topics to inform their world view and create better citizens as guided by trained educators?

Sincerely,

Sonya M Durney
MLA, Legislative Chair

and

Alisia Revitt
MLA, President