

Testimony for LD 405

Katie Schindler Arundel, ME March 6, 2023

Good morning,

My name is Katie Schindler, I live in Arundel, ME.

November 15, 2022 will be a date that I never forget. I work at Sanford High School and Sanford Regional Technical Center in Sanford, ME. The morning started as a regular old day. It was block 1, I was in my office and our principal came over the intercom and announced we were going into lockdown. I calmly got up closed my office door and turned off the light. I sat back down at my desk and honestly thought it was a drill. If you have never been to Sanford High School, you may not know the amount of glass in this amazingly beautiful building. The entire front of my office is glass and I can easily see into most of the surrounding classrooms. I suspected this was not a drill when the classroom next to mine which faces the front of the building began pushing all the tables, cabinets and desks in front of the door. I realized that the thing I thought about every day when I walking the building was about to unfold. I looked around my office trying to figure out where I could safely hide. I hit the floor and squeezed into an 18x20 space behind a shelf and file cabinet, knees pulled to my chest so my feet would not be seen. Within minutes I could hear and see armed officers in full gear with large guns running through our halls. I had no idea what was happening, but I was terrified. I texted my husband, "We are in lockdown, it's not a drill, I don't know what is happening, I'm scared, I love you." He got on a police scanner app and replied. "Katie, they are saying there is an active shooter in the building, 4 down, where are you, stay out of sight, I love you."

For the next hour or so, (it felt like an eternity) I stayed hidden wondering which of my colleagues or students had been injured, listening to hundreds of law enforcement officers running through our building, searching every corner, wondering if I would see my family again. I literally internally argued whether I should text my three grown children to tell them and let them know I love them. I did text them, because I thought I would rather have them worried than not tell them one last time how much they meant to me. After what

seemed like forever, armed officers came to escort us out of the building. We were instructed to walk out with our hands above our heads, as we walked through the halls, still unsure of what was happening. Students were crying we were trying to console them as we were escorted through the building to the gym, unsure and scared of what we might see in our halls. In the gym, we had to account for every student and staff member and then we were bussed to a community gym where students would be reunited with family. We still were not sure what exactly was happening, we just kicked into gear to help and make sure that all our students were safe and comforted. When we finally left Sanford High School to load buses, I could see what had unfolded outside. It looked like what you see on TV far too often these days, emergency vehicles everywhere from FBI, Maine State Police, Sanford PD, surrounding towns PD, Homeland Security, and more. Once on buses we were taken to the Memorial Gym. I wondered why we had police escort and then I realized that you could not get through the streets of Sanford, cars lined the streets, news trucks, panicked parents, concerned citizens; people were everywhere. Most of you probably know how the rest of the day unfolded, we were all informed that this was a hoax. We worked tirelessly until every student was reunited with a family member or friend and was safe, at least physically. And then exhausted and not sure what had just happened I boarded a school bus to go back to Sanford High School and try to process the events of the day.

If this bill helps in any way to prevent others from going through what we went through on November 15th, I urge each of you to pass this important piece of legislation. I am forever changed from this event. I hate the word hoax! This was not a hoax to those of us that were in the building that day. We thought there was an active shooter in our building and the fear we felt was very REAL! When I walk in a room I scan the room to see where to hide, and how I would protect my students. That being said, I can not say enough about the swift response of all officials. If I had to experience this event I am grateful for all those that were there protecting us that day. I am in awe of the work you do and how you can go from a place of protection to being

soft counselors consoling our students as they were leaving their classrooms. Thank you to all of you!

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak.

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