

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF

L.D. 405

AN ACT TO PREVENT FALSE REPORTING LEADING TO EVACUATION, SHUTDOWN OR LOCKDOWN

Senator Beebe-Center, Representative Salisbury, and members of the Criminal Justice and Public Safety Committee. I am Eileen King, deputy executive director of Maine School Management Association, testifying on behalf of the legislative committees of the Maine School Boards Association and Maine School Superintendents Association, in support of L.D. 405.

On Tuesday, November 15th of this past year, dozens of schools were victims of swatting. Swatting is when a person makes a false report that results in the deployment of emergency personnel services. Two districts believed there were active shooters in their buildings. The buildings went into lockdown and appropriate actions were taken to keep students and staff safe. It wasn't long until they realized that they had received false reports. However, in the time it took to verify that the reports were false, hundreds of students and educators were traumatized as they locked themselves in classrooms fearing for their lives. Parents flocked to the schools to wait to see if their children were alive. State troopers, sheriff departments, and police dispatched personnel to the schools, and some area hospitals prepared for mass casualties. There was a sigh of relief that day when we realized that this was a hoax, but this hoax caused the same reaction as if it had been real. Later that night, a colleague shared with me that his daughter told him that she thought that she was going to die that day.

The events of November 15th caused needless trauma and anxiety. Some of our students and staff still live with the fears and images from that day. Our organizations support L.D. 405 and encourage that the weight of the law be applied to anyone who engages in swatting or who knowingly causes the evacuation of our schools and other gathering places that generates the emergency response from emergency services personnel.