

Dear Respective Members of the Education and Cultural Affairs Committee,

I am giving testimony today as a Maine resident and retired servicemember of the U.S. Army. After serving 22 years of honorable service in the armed forces with 33 months deployed overseas in combat, to say that I was dismayed to learn of LD729, would be an understatement. When my wife told me that a law had been passed where I and my children would not be able to attend school because of our religious convictions. I was devastated. I was ashamed to call myself a Maine resident. After moving my family around the country for 17 years to support the nation, we were finally going to be able to come home. A home that was permanent. Where our family and support system had been forged and bred. A familiar place that my wife and I were both raised and were looking forward to raising our two children. This opportunity of a life that we were eager to begin was stolen from us by the passing of an unconstitutional law. A law that divided those American Maine residents who wished to practice their religious beliefs without fear of reprisal and fearful individuals who saw fit to deny such beliefs. I am here today in support of LD51. I am here today as a warrior that has fought many battles. I will continue to fight for the freedom of religion and against oppression without the uniform. I will continue to fight so that other families like mine can live in a state they once called home. Pass LD51 and give the freedom of religion and education back to our children. Don't make them have to fight for a God given right.

SFC (Ret). J.J. Brown

