

Claire McCallion  
Lisbon  
LD 51

Good morning, Senator Rafferty, Representative Brennan, and esteemed members of the Committee for Education and Cultural Affairs.

My name is Claire McCallion. I am a lifelong Mainer, a current homeowner in Lisbon, a mother, former public school educator, and current home school parent. I am writing to testify in support of LD 51, LD 869, LD 1098, LD 1148, LD 1209, and LD 1228.

I would like to begin by sharing with you two great loves in my life: My family, and my home state. The two are so deeply intertwined that I cannot imagine raising my children anywhere else. Nor would I want my children to have to leave the state should they want to pursue higher education here one day. Sadly, this is exactly the situation that we find ourselves in since the passing of LD 798.

I would like to share with you a little bit about our family and our story, to help you see the impact that LD 798 has had and will continue to have on our lives, should the above listed bills not pass.

I am a Mainer born and raised and love the beauty and uniqueness of our great state. My husband came to Maine for college and fell so deeply in love with the state that he never considered moving back to his home state after graduation. When we married and had children, we knew that we wanted to raise them here among family, surrounded by the ocean, forests, and mountains.

When our oldest two children were school aged we enrolled them in a public charter school and were excited for the education that they would receive. After having taken a few years off from my teaching career to stay home with our children when they were young, I took a job teaching at my local high school technical program. I worked running the preschool program in the Education Department, overseeing young people who wanted to become educators themselves one day. It was a job I found deeply rewarding, and one I hoped to grow in for many years. We were happy in our careers, our children's schooling, and the outlook for all of our futures.

Then LD 798 passed and suddenly, our family was being discriminated against for our religious beliefs. We were told that our children could no longer participate in the public school program that they were in, unless we were willing to violate our beliefs. We were told that we had no alternatives, or recourse. We were coldly and cruelly kicked out of our school community.

I had no choice but to quit the job I loved, that I was passionate about and successful in (training future teachers) because the system that I worked for would no longer accept my children because their beliefs weren't convenient.

We were coerced into an educational decision that we would not have otherwise made.

Thankfully, home education has turned out to be one of the best things that could have happened for our children and our family, and we are so grateful that the adventure is ours to take. However, we are still impacted by LD 798 on a regular basis. My bright and brilliant children cannot choose to participate in any programs offered by the public school system, including sports. They cannot attend day care should I need to take a job that would require me to work outside the home during the hours that my husband is at work. They will not be able to attend any of the amazing programs offered by the technical schools during their high school years, they will not be able to attend Maine's University System (of which I am a graduate). They will be forced to move out of state for college, or if they would like to pursue a career in the medical field.

All of these wonderful opportunities are no longer available to my children because of the discriminatory nature of LD 798.

At a time in history when diversity and inclusion are in the spotlight, and our state

prides itself in moving forward, a whole population of people are being viciously and harmfully discriminated against because of their desire for medical freedom of choice. In closing, I beg you to consider the impact of this discrimination on my children, and the thousands of other Maine children and families affected by LD 798, and vote to support the passing of these important bills.

Thank you for your time and consideration.