



Support of LD 1263:: An Act to Require School Identification Cards to Include the Telephone Number of a Suicide Prevention Hotline

Senator Rafferty, Representative Brennan, and Distinguished Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs, my name is Gay Anne McDonald and I am the Executive Director for the Maine Administrators of Services for Children with Disabilities (MADSEC). MADSEC is a membership organization of over 400 special education professionals, representing close to 300 private and public school special education administrators and Child Development Services special education directors across the state.

On behalf of MADSEC, I am providing testimony in support of LD 1263:: An Act to Require School Identification Cards to Include the Telephone Number of a Suicide Prevention Hotline.

As we face increased and serious mental health needs in our youth, it is imperative to provide outreach in multiple ways to best support our Maine students. Unfortunately, individuals experiencing mental health struggles often find it difficult to seek help prior to crisis due to the stigma surrounding mental health in our country. According to the 2021 Maine Integrated Youth Health Survey (MIYHS), more than 35% of high school students in Maine reported feeling sad or hopeless almost every day for at least 2 weeks in a row, 18.5% seriously considered attempting suicide, 14.1% made a plan about how they would attempt suicide, and 9% attempted suicide at least once. Such numbers should raise significant concern in our state and implore us to do better for our youth.

The passing of LD 1263 would add a local, state, or national suicide prevention hotline phone number to all school identification cards for those secondary schools who issue student identification cards, providing students with a readily available phone number to call in times of immediate need. Such an act could decrease the number of Maine high school students attempting suicide in our state.

At any moment in time, a suicide prevention hotline on a student's school identification card could be the difference between losing a life and saving a life. MADSEC encourages the Committee to vote 'ought to pass' on LD 1263 to support the mental health needs of our Maine students.

Thank you for your time, consideration, and service to our state.

50 Industrial Drive, Augusta, ME 04330 • (207) 626-3380 • FAX (207) 626-3347
Web: www.madsec.org • E-Mail: info@madsec.org • gmcdonald@madsec.org

2022-2023 Officers: President Susan Fossett; President-Elect Kathleen Hamblen; Vice President, Lesley Snyder; Secretary Sandy Flacke; Treasurer Cheryl Mercier; Past-President Timothy O'Connor **Staff:** Executive Director Gay Anne McDonald; Administrative Assistance Pamela W. Ouellette