

LD 51 Testimony April 3 2023

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

I would like to start with some definitions today:

Discrimination: The unjust or prejudicial treatment of different categories of people, especially on the grounds of ethnicity, age, sex, or disability.

Segregation: the action or state of setting someone or something apart from others.

The State of Maine is actively engaging in Medical and educational discrimination and segregation. . This alone should be enough to pass this bill.

My Name is Ellen Stanley and I am from Hancock Maine. I am a 30+ year Certified Maine teacher. I support all forms of education.

What I have seen since the passing of LD 798 has been appalling, and very harmful to children and. the future of our state.

I review children's homeschool work at the end of each year, to certify to the state that homeschool programming is acceptable. . These meetings are celebratory in nature, with time for feedback and support. I love assisting homeschool families, but am a STRONG supporter of public education as well.

Since the removal of religious and philosophical exemptions, I have had no less than 20 reviews that have begun with tears. Tears from the parents, tears from the children. These are families that have literally been forced to homeschool. They don't want to be doing it, and are TERRIFIED for their children's futures... that they will not get adequate education.

Two things I have seen in this newly marginalized population: parents who never wanted to homeschool, who now have students with extra needs, who have no access to special services, and no money to seek private services...Often they have lost one income to homeschool and are struggling financially. This is not acceptable.

Don't get me started on the children excluded from their beloved football, drama, cheering etc. But they can attend those games and competitions... because Science??? Health? I am not sure. It doesn't make sense.

The second is some very select parents are just not built for homeschooling. It's hard. They are perfectly good parents and people, but just don't have what it takes to homeschool. THEY LITERALLY HAVE NO CHOICE. These families and their children matter. They have no help and nowhere to go, except me and other parents.

When LD 798 passed, most everyone in government assumed that those that needed medical exemptions could get them. I will assure you... a pet unicorn would be easier to obtain. Doctors are afraid to write them. Numerous parents tell stories of doctors privately telling them their child should not get more shots, but they are unwilling to write an exemption... for fear of disciplinary action.

Stop state sanctioned discrimination and segregation... STOP IT NOW!. Vote yes on LD 51.

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