

## **TESTIMONY OF THE MAINE IMMIGRANTS' RIGHTS COALITION (MIRC) ON:**

- L.D. 52: An Act to Allow Certain School Employees to Carry Firearms on School Property
- L.D. 518: An Act to Allow Armed Security in Schools
- L.D. 1557: An Act to Increase and Enhance School Safety by Allowing Individuals with Concealed Carry Permits to Possess Handguns on School Property

Senator Rafferty, Representative Brennan, and Members of the Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs:

My name is Tobin Williamson and I am the Advocacy Manager with the Maine Immigrants' Rights Coalition (MIRC), a statewide network of almost 100 member organizations working to enhance the lives of Maine's immigrant communities. MIRC works to advance systemic changes in Maine through collaborative advocacy to ensure that voices of the state's large, diverse, and growing immigrant communities are heard.

It seems that each week, there is another school shooting in America. I cannot imagine the fear that parents and children have that their school could be next. The common denominator in all of these shootings is guns. Regrettably, these proposals would just put more guns – the very weapons used to cause death and destruction – into schools. This is not good policy. It is easy to imagine a scenario in which accidental discharge or theft of a weapon results in catastrophe. Recently, guns have become the leading cause of death of children nationwide. We also know that BIPOC children face disproportionate discrimination by security. Combined, this is a potentially deadly combination.

We trust Dr. Abbie Yamamoto of Portland Public Schools when she says “From where I sit, leading an educational institution whose constituents are majority immigrants and BIPOC, the issue feels dire. Our school, adult learners, instructors, and staff will not be safer for having guns here.” In their testimony against L.D. 1557, the Maine Principals' Association said, "We are strongly opposed to having anyone with a handgun in our schools." In their testimony against L.D. 52, the Maine Children's Alliance said, “introducing more guns into schools is not an effective policy solution to address this issue.”

This all seems pretty straightforward to us. If guns are ever to be carried, they need to be on a military battlefield against enemy combatants or hunting for food in the outdoors; not in the hallways of our school buildings full of students and teachers. We wholeheartedly oppose L.D. 52, L.D. 518, and L.D. 1557 and encourage you to do the same. Thank you very much for your consideration of this important issue.

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