



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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“LD 78 An Act to Require Elementary School Students to Learn Cursive Writing”

Senator Rafferty, Representative Murphy, and esteemed members of the Joint Standing Committee on Education & Cultural Affairs, I am Representative Underwood, serving House District 5, which covers Presque Isle located in central Aroostook County.

I come to you today to ask for consideration on LD 78, “An Act to Require Elementary School Students to Learn Cursive Writing” It is believed by researchers that cursive writing is important to cognitive development. I believe that we owe it to Maine children to incorporate this lost practice into our core curriculum. As legislators, I think it is vital that we jump at any opportunity to enhance the cognitive development for the future of Maine Children.

Some have argued that cursive writing can increase hand-eye coordination, sharpen mental effectiveness, increase retention of information, improve spelling, increase social and communication skills, and help students decipher old documents.

Beyond cognitive benefits, the ability to read and write cursive is a matter of historical and practical literacy. Our Nation’s founding documents, personal letters, and many primary sources are written in cursive. If we do not equip our children with the ability to read cursive, we risk cutting them off from firsthand access to essential historical materials and even family records. This bill ensures that future generations will retain the ability to connect with their past while developing critical skills for the future.

In 2023, California Governor Gavin Newsom signed legislation requiring the teaching of cursive writing across the state for grades 1-6. This law amended the state’s education code to include “instruction in cursive or joined italics in the appropriate grade levels.” This bill was intended to help students to be able to read and write in cursive with the benefit of being able to read primary source historical documents. California joined 17 other states that have laws on the books requiring cursive to be taught to elementary-aged students. These states include Alabama, Arizona, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Indiana, Maryland, Massachusetts, Mississippi, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, & Virginia.

The reality is that research supports cursive. William R. Klemm, Ph.D of *Psychology Today*, writes of the biological and psychological benefits of learning cursive. He goes on to mention that “Hand-eye coordination is a major developmental feature.” (Ph.D., 2013) A 2020 study from the Norwegian University of Science and Technology found that students writing in cursive activated different electrical activity in the brain as compared to typing and argued: “young children should learn how to write by hand successfully, and, at the same time learn to manage to write on a keyboard.”

This legislation does not aim to replace modern technological advancements but rather to complement them. We recognize the importance of digital literacy however, ensuring that students retain foundational skills like cursive writing with provide them will a well-rounded education. We should not view this as an either-or debate but as an opportunity to equip our students with a comprehensive toolkit for success.

By reinstating cursive writing in the core curriculum, we are investing in the intellectual and developmental growth of Maine's Children. This is an issue that transcends party lines, as it is about giving every student the best possible foundation for learning and success. I urge this committee to vote "ought to pass" on LD 78.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Joseph F. Underwood". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the printed name.

Joseph F. Underwood
State Representative

REFERENCES:

Education Week. (2023, November). *More states require schools to teach cursive writing. Why?* <https://www.edweek.org/teaching-learning/more-states-require-schools-to-teach-cursive-writing-why/2023/11>

Klemm, W. R. (2013, August). Biological and psychology benefits of learning cursive. Memory Medic. Psychology Today. <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/memory-medic/201308/biological-and-psychology-benefits-of-learning-cursive>

USA Today. (2023, October 20). *Gavin Newsom signs law requiring the teaching of cursive writing in schools.* <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/education/2023/10/20/gavin-newsom-signs-law-requiring-teaching-cursive-writing-schools/71243813007/>