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Handwriting Repair/Handwriting That Works  
LD 78

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Testimony regarding L.D. 78 —Thursday, February 27, 2025

To Senator Rafferty, Representative Noonan Murphy and the members of the Education and Cultural Affairs Committee,

Schools in Maine, as elsewhere, are known to struggle with low levels of literacy among their students and alumni. It is also well known, from research, that direct instruction in Handwriting during the elementary grades significantly boost the acquisition of literacy skills (including both reading and composition skills) — allowing for a great and productive, saving of classroom time and effort towards success when Handwriting becomes an integral part of instruction and literacy and the language arts.

However, LD 78 (as written) is counterproductive in a couple of ways. Not only is it likely to limit local control (and thereby likely to cause resentment among stakeholders in the process), but they exist another obstacle within the Bill: an obstacle, perhaps, not realized by those who introduced and support this bill.

Namely:

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The word “cursive” is susceptible of more than one definition when it is, as here, unmodified by any descriptive terms. (Different dictionaries define “cursive” in different ways. Some dictionaries define cursive as Handwriting, which joins absolutely all of the letters within each word, while others simply state that cursive handwriting which joins letters (without specifying, whether all of them must be joined: something that many adults do not, in fact, do.)

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Of greater significance is the reality that the research on handwriting is systematically misrepresented by those who use it to support the introduction and enactment of cursive mandate bills. Specifically: despite the abundant and increasing research evidence on the significant benefits of direct handwriting instruction in the literacy in language arts curriculum, literally none of the research evidence has found benefits in a cursive mode of handwriting that exceed any of the benefits found in a printed mode of handwriting. (in other words, there is no evidence that the benefits of vomoetent instruction are somehow restricted to instruction in cursive.)

These important facts are being ignored during a legislative process in which supporters of the cursive mandate bill have catered to the subjectivity of uninformed public opinion on the matter. Too many members of the public (including too many of the teachers and administrators who will be responsible for implementing and a Handwriting requirement, as well as too many of the parents who will be striving to help their children, meet such a requirement) are under the false impression that the only two possibilities in Handwriting are either to join in the loop and ornament absolutely all the alphabet letters or to join and loop and ornament. Absolutely none of them. This contributes to the common supposition that the best way to teach handwriting must somehow be to alternate both of these methods: starting with a printed method and then suddenly jumping to a cursive method of precisely opposite characteristics. There is no research evidence that such an educational gap is the best way to go, or is even a good way to go. Not only does research failed to support the popular assumption that cursive makes people smarter, the popular assumption that there is no way to learn how to read cursive, except by learning how to write that way too, or the popular assumption that signatures are somehow legitimate or invalid if they are done in any style, other than a completely connected, cursive script, those popular exempt assumptions ignore the documented existence of more than one or two ways to “skin the handwriting cat.” in other words, the popular misconceptions on this subject, ignore the realities that there are numerous sorts of Handwriting

instruction methods, and curricula available today: not just one and not just two. Other methods exist — notably those based on the historical Italic mode of handwriting, used in most English-speaking nations around the world, and in many of the other nations that use our alphabet and that gain stellar academic results in literacy as in other areas: methods which do not rely on “jumping“ a child from one form of writing headlong into another, with the results, usually being at the child masters, neither. Instead, handwriting methods rooted in Italic handwriting allow a consistent progression, free of style changes, or other internal self contradictions, from the very beginning of the educational process until it’s culmination in a fluently rapid and legible way to write.

As Maine periodically reviews its educational standards and their outcomes, through attention to the Maine Learning Results, the state deserves to pay attention to the results (or, rather, non— results) of cursive mandates that have been adopted in the past in over 20 USA states and several Canadian provinces. Uniformly, as far as can be determined, those methods have had no beneficial effect on the handwriting, cognition, or literacy development of the generation of students that has now grown-up under such mandates.

Therefore, I (Karen Sue “Kate“ Gladstone) —CEO of Handwriting Repair/Handwriting That Works, author of READ CURSIVE FAST, and International Director of the World Handwriting Contest — testify in support of amending LD 78 to read as follows;

“Beginning July 1, 2026, the parameters for essential instruction and graduation requirements adopted by the department pursuant to section 6209 for English language arts must provide for regular instruction in and opportunities to use cursive print-mode handwriting, and cursive-mode handwriting when developmentally appropriate for the student, beginning no later than grade 3 and continuing to the end of grade 5. The instruction must use best practices, as documented by research sources be designed to enable students to demonstrate fluency competency in cursive handwriting by the end of grade 5, with the selection of handwriting models, methods, and curricula to prioritize those that can demonstrate highly fluent and highly legible outcomes for the majority of students without subjecting students to change changes in the overall basics of style between the print stage and the cursive stage of a program..”

Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully submitted,

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