

Testimony of Sara Needleman
Supporting LD 537

An Act to Prohibit the Doxing of a Minor and to Authorize a Related Civil Action
Sponsored by Representative Melanie Sachs

Members of the Judiciary Committee, my name is Sara Needleman. I am a mother of two children who were born and raised in Maine. I am also a career public school educator who worked as a teacher in the K-12 system for 12 years and I have taught in the Teacher Education Department at the University of Southern Maine for the last 17 years. I am writing in support of this bill as it seems the common sense required of us to protect our children is in fact, not enough.

As a K-12 teacher, I always chose to work with middle school students and had the privilege of teaching multiple subjects. Whether our lesson for the day was essay writing or designing investigations to explore Newton's Laws of Motion, we were guided by the essential question I posted at the front of my classroom: What is just, right and good? While the day-to-day learning required the study of specifics like writing a strong thesis statement and figuring out how many trials were needed to declare our data reliable, the goal in my classroom was to see our academic pursuits and the collaboration embedded in them as the path to being our best individual and collective selves. No lesson was higher than that one.

As a member of the faculty in USM's teacher education department, my goal is the same. Only now I have the opportunity to help our rising teachers, people preparing to work in kindergarten classrooms and AP Physics classrooms alike, to see that regardless of the content they address and methodology they invoke, their greatest aim is to raise up the children in their classrooms to be their best and most complete selves. In EDU 100, Exploring Teaching as a Profession, we examine what it means to "see" each of our students. In EDU 510, Creating Positive Classroom Environments, we explore the idea that building connections with students is the cornerstone of creating a space where they can learn. In EDU 547, Planning and Assessment, we consider myriad ways to remove barriers our students might face in lessons and assessments.

When these are the central tenets of what our rising Maine teachers learn, the very idea that we would need legislation to protect minors from the hate and vitriol that comes with doxing seems absurd. And yet, here we are. Since this is where we are, I ask you to please support this legislation so that when common sense and decency wither, we have the law to protect our children.

Sara Needleman
Portland
LD 537

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