

Monday March 3rd, 2025

Dear Members of the Education and Cultural Affairs Committee,

I am writing to express my opposition for LD 165, *An Act to Allow School Boards to Expel or Suspend Students Regardless of Grade*. This bill raises important considerations regarding school discipline, student rights, and the impact of exclusionary policies on Maine's learners.

As someone deeply invested in the well-being and success of Maine's students and someone who was once in a special education classroom and lives with a disability, this bill is not the answer to solving our problems. My parents, older brother, and other relatives have also been or were in education for 3 decades, and believe that expulsion and suspension is not the answer. Instead, it sets a precedent that will be incredibly difficult to reverse and ultimately, it harms our children. While maintaining safe and supportive learning environments is essential, and while I understand there are major concerns presented by educators about safety and well-being of our educators working with students that may have higher needs and challenges, we must exhaust all possible scenarios before expulsion and suspension.

Concerns to Consider:

- **Impact on Early Learners:** Research shows that suspensions and expulsions in early childhood can have lasting negative effects on a child's academic and social development. Young students often require behavioral support rather than exclusion from the classroom.
- **Disproportionate Effects:** Data from across the country indicate that disciplinary actions often disproportionately affect students with disabilities, students of color, and those from low-income backgrounds. Expanding expulsion policies could worsen these disparities.
- **The Need for Alternative Solutions:** Rather than removing students from school, Maine should invest in trauma-informed practices, social-emotional learning programs, behavioral interventions, and sensory learning equipment implementation that address the root causes of challenging behaviors.

We need to continue believing in our investments in programs that the Maine Department of Education are offering for FREE to schools all over Maine to help with positive behavior interventions and supports. In addition, we need to make strategic investments in sensory learning environments through adaptive equipment, that allows teachers to create more adaptable learning spaces helping students regulate in their regular classroom setting with their typically developing peers. Research shows that when children are more regulated, they are able to focus, learn, and grow. I believe our children offer something powerful and

I urge the committee to consider the long-term consequences of LD 165 and explore alternatives that keep students engaged in learning while ensuring schools remain safe and supportive for all.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Connor J. Archer". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Connor" being more legible than the last name "Archer".

With Appreciation,

Connor J. Archer, MBA

Founder & Chairman/CEO

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