



March 3, 2025

Re: Testimony in Support of LD537: An Act to Prohibit the Doxing of a Minor and to Authorize a Related Civil Action

Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn, and members of the Committee on Judiciary:

We write this letter as co-chairs of the Legislative Committee of the Maine Psychological Association in support of ***LD537: An Act to Prohibit the Doxing of a Minor and to Authorize a Related Civil Action.***

“Doxing” is a relatively new term that is similar to older terms such as “outing” or “blackmail.” It refers to the knowing disclosure of personal identifying information of a person, without that person's consent, which is intended to cause harm to that person.

In this age of social media and “black sites” on the Internet, the disclosure of personal identifying information is a terrifying threat to adults that can lead to stolen identities and various kinds of financial exploitation. This type of fraudulent abuse of personal information can be devastating and sometimes leads to criminal prosecution.

Disclosure of a minor's private information may also involve clearly illegal acts such as child sexual abuse or sexual exploitation. It may also be a form of *cyberbullying* by peers or adults.

The psychological effects of cyberbullying on minors are clearly harmful.

*“Children and adolescents who experience cyberbullying report increased mental health issues and physical health problems. Additionally, they face a higher likelihood of substance use, depression, anxiety, loneliness, and suicidal ideation, as well as decreased self-esteem and poor academic performance. Children and adolescents who experience both traditional bullying and cyberbullying report more negative academic, social, and emotional outcomes compared to students who experience only one form of bullying.”*

[Citation: National Association of School Psychologists. (2023). *Cyberbullying: Prevention and Intervention Strategies.*]

Doxing is more pernicious than cyberbullying in its psychological impact because it involves revealing personal identifying nonpublic information that a person has not authorized another person to publish. It is designed to cause harm and to stigmatize an individual in public. It is akin to “tabloid journalism” or “outing” a public person about their sexual orientation.

Doxing of a minor is the most heinous form of doxing. It attacks a young person who no doubt already feels vulnerable and is often exposed to public scrutiny because of private characteristics



that may bring them ridicule or threats of harm. It dramatically increases their vulnerability to mental health distress, which may be an existing risk factor for these vulnerable individuals because of social stigma or political ideology.

We support LD537, which provides minors with the possibility of a civil action so they can seek any of the following damages: injunctive relief, actual damages, compensatory damages, punitive damages, or any combination thereof.

Very respectfully,

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Co-Chairs, Legislative Committee  
Maine Psychological Association