

Heather Whitaker  
Windham  
LD 537

Testimony in Support of LD 537  
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Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn and esteemed members of the Committee on Judiciary, I am writing today in support of LD 537, An Act to Prohibit the Doxing of a Minor and to Authorize a Related Civil Action.

My name is Heather Whitaker and I have dedicated the past 24 years as a public school teacher. I am currently leading an alternative education program that prioritizes hands-on, interdisciplinary learning while ensuring a safe and supportive environment for all students. I am the Co-President of the Maine County and State Teachers of the Year Association and the 2020 Maine Teacher of the Year. Through all my experiences as a teacher, I have worked extensively to create educational opportunities that empower and protect young people.

As both an educator and a parent, I am deeply troubled that adults can publicly share images and personal information about minors online with the intent to shame, humiliate, intimidate, or incite chaos simply because they disagree with something about that child or their family. The practice of doxing minors is not just unethical—it is dangerous. Exposure of a child's personal information online leaves them vulnerable to harassment, stalking, and even physical harm. It can impact their mental health, disrupt their education, and place undue stress on their families.

LD 537 is a necessary step toward safeguarding Maine's children from these real and growing threats. By prohibiting the doxing of minors and establishing legal consequences for those who engage in this harmful practice, this legislation reinforces that a child's safety and privacy must be prioritized over anyone's so-called "right" to weaponize online spaces. There is a strong legal and ethical argument that the First Amendment should not be used as a shield to justify the harassment of children online. Free speech does not and should not include the right to intimidate, endanger, or cause harm to minors.

As educators, we work hard to teach responsible digital citizenship—guiding students to use technology in ethical and productive ways. However, our efforts alone are not enough. Strong legal protections must be in place to prevent and address online abuse of minors. LD 537 provides those critical protections and ensures that those who exploit digital platforms to target children are held accountable.

I urge you to support this vital legislation and stand with Maine's families and educators in ensuring that children are protected from the dangers of online harassment. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,  
Heather Whitaker