

Jason Curry
SOUTH PORTLAND
LD 537

(Elbow Patches)

My name is Jason Curry, and I am a resident of South Portland. I'm a History teacher in Southern Maine. You can tell I'm a High School teacher from the elbow patches. I teach Psychology and Sociology, and what we know about teens is that they try on different identities and experiment with different friend groups in an effort to find their true selves. If they can do this successfully, they feel supported and validated. If not, they may feel isolated, depressed, helpless, and are at a greater risk of committing suicide.

According to Common Sense Media, the average teen spends 7 hours and 22 minutes a day on screens, between school and social activities. The online world is their reality and if they are doxed and humiliated for anything from learning disabilities, physical appearance, religious beliefs, social class and extreme poverty, gender identity, sexual preference, ethnicity, or any other reason, they can easily feel that their world is over.

According to the National Institute of Mental Health, suicide is the 3rd highest cause of death for young people between 15 and 24 years of age, and 41% of children who reported having social anxiety attribute it to cyberbullying.

Recently, an adult with a significant public profile posted identifying information and photos of a Maine minor online that received significant national media coverage. I read comments from readers of the article on a social media hate outlet that claims to be an alternative news source, and the first two comments read "This kid needs a severe beating." and "This child is very mentally disturbed and needs conversion therapy."

No teen should be doxed by anyone this way and subjected to this kind of abuse. I've seen the effects of doxing a minor to the school they attend and the community where they live.

No student wants additional police presence in and around the building.

No student wants local media outlets surrounding the entrances of the school pestering parents and students alike for juicy soundbites and evidence of community tension or division.

School secretaries don't want to come to work at 6:30am to wade through hundreds of angry partisan phone calls from across the country prompted by national coverage of the student's doxing by malicious and poorly informed broadcasters and public personalities.

I am proud to say that a group of the most compassionate and intelligent people I know lives in this community, and they wrote a letter in support of LD537, which has been submitted electronically on March 2. It was signed by 1,135 Mainers in just four days. The letter outlines further ways to protect minors from cyber abuse like doxing that go beyond what LD537 offers, and backs it up with examples of anti-doxing legislation passed on fully bipartisan terms in Red and Blue states alike. I am proud to call your attention to this letter, of which I am a signatory.

Saving our children from online doxing is a bipartisan no-brainer.