Part 2

Notes/Testimony re. Maine LD78 2025 – 2026

An Act to Require Elementary School Students to Learn Cursive Writing

Senator Rafferty, Representatives Noonan Murphy, and Underwood, and members of the Education and Cultural Affairs Committee,

I would like to add the following to my previous notes, which contain separate but related content from my oral presentation before the committee on February 27, 2025. - Elisabeth Nelson-Smith

The reasons for my support of the Act LD78 2025-2026 include:

1. There are legitimate, evidence-based reasons for mandated handwriting instruction, according to Jonathan Dubay of handwritingsuccess.com and Kathleen Wright of The Handwriting Collaborative – "to help close the elementary school literacy gap; to promote better reading and writing skills; and to allow for better notetaking skills in upper grades and high school."*

2. Some children love and enjoy learning *looped cursive* and I appreciate that school systems in Maine are free to choose that option as needed. I have met physical and occupational therapists, as I mentioned in my previous notes, who find the method helpful as children learn to write.

3. I share a concern with others that many children need to learn a *fluent handwriting* method after they learn print-mode. Children for whom this is an appropriate learning goal may benefit from introduction to at least the basics of writing rapidly and legibly. (I personally prefer the italic method over looped cursive, for reasons explained in my oral presentation and first set of notes.)

4. Could the lack of requirement for children to learn connected or semi-connected handwriting suggest to children that fluent handwriting is no longer important? Could this negatively affect their studies? Although some children may develop semi-connected writing on their own, such a development is not universal.

5. I am also concerned about children and adults during outages of various kinds. Without back-up systems, and without effective handwriting, how do older students and some adults study and work effectively during outages?

6. What about the "Digital Divide"? What will happen when schoolchildren graduate and grow older? Will many need fluent handwriting because they will not be able to afford necessary devices?

7. I am grateful that my own handwriting (a semi-connected italic form) has served me in many ways alongside digital skills.

Resources shared by Jonathan Dubay:

*"Research (2) (3) (4) indicates that cursive-mode handwriting can help accomplish these things, if it is part of a multi-mode approach (i.e. using print handwriting as a foundation, cursive-mode handwriting for fluency when appropriate for the student and typing for long compositional writing)."

(2) Meta-analysis study: Hebert M, Kearns DM, Hayes JB, Bazis P, Cooper S. "Why Children with Dyslexia Struggle with Writing and How to Help Them." Lang Speech Hear Serv Sch. 2018;49(4):843-863.

(3) Wiley, R., Rapp, B. "The Effects of Handwriting Experience on Literacy Learning", Psychological Science, June 2023.

(4) Mueller, Pam & Oppenheimer, Daniel. "The Pen Is Mightier Than the Keyboard: Advantages of Longhand Over Laptop Note Taking." Psychological Science, 2014, Vol. 25(6) 1159–116.

"Example of clear language on handwriting for any state's department of education: OREGON LITERACY PLAN, Oregon K-12 Literacy Framework — Writing WA-9 Developed by the Literacy Leadership State Team (LLST) in partnership with the Oregon Department of Education (ODE)"

(https://www.oregon.gov/ode/educator-resources/standards/ELA/Documents/entire-writing-framework.pdf)

Also see:

Barchowsky Fluent Handwriting, by Nan Jay Barchowsky
https://bfhhandwriting.com

Handwriting Styles by the Numbers, a video in vimeo.com from Getty-Dubay Italic
Handwriting Success, LLC
https://vimeo.com/903027936
https://handwritingsuccess.com

Kate Gladstone, Handwriting Repair
https://handwritingrepair.info

Kathleen Wright, Executive Director
The Handwriting Collaborative, LLC
https://handwritingcollaborative.org