

To the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs

From: Sean Hanson, School Administrator in Gorham Maine

Re: In support of LD 165: An Act to Modify Discipline Policies in Maine's Public Schools

Date: March 6, 2025

Senator Rafferty, Representative Murphy, and Distinguished Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs,

My name is Sean Hanson, and I am the administrator of a PreK-5 school. I am writing today to express my strong support for LD 165, which seeks to modify discipline policies in Maine's public schools, particularly in regard to suspensions for students in grade 5 and below. This is my personal and professional view and not a reflection in any way of my place of work. I am unable to attend in person or Zoom at this time.

As an administrator in a PreK-5 school, I have witnessed firsthand the complex challenges that arise when a student engages in behavior that disrupts the learning environment or threatens the safety of others. While we are dedicated to providing a supportive and nurturing environment for all students, there are instances where immediate action, such as a short-term out-of-school suspension, becomes necessary to protect the well-being of the student and others in the school community.

I believe that the changes proposed in this bill, particularly the provisions for out-of-school suspensions for students in grade 5 and below, provide a reasonable and responsible framework for managing such behaviors. The bill clearly outlines the circumstances under which a suspension may be issued, ensuring that this decision is not made lightly, but rather with careful consideration of the student's needs and the safety of the school community. Importantly, the bill allows the school principal to determine whether an out-of-school suspension may benefit the student or whether additional support structures should be developed.

Specifically, the following aspects of the proposed bill are of particular significance to me as an administrator:

1. **Imminent Danger and Effective Interventions:** The bill rightly allows for out-of-school suspensions in cases where there is an imminent danger of serious physical injury to the student or others, ensuring that the safety of all students and staff is the top priority. Additionally, it emphasizes the need for less restrictive interventions to be ineffective before resorting to suspension, promoting a thoughtful and measured approach.
2. **Limiting Suspension Duration:** By limiting out-of-school suspensions for students in grade 5 or below to no more than 3-5 days, the bill ensures that students do not miss excessive instructional time. It also emphasizes that principals should make every effort to minimize the time students are out of school, which helps to ensure they do not fall behind academically.
3. **Supportive School Protocols:** The requirement for schools to develop appropriate protocols and staff support to meet the needs of the student before deciding on suspension reflects a balanced approach. We are committed to providing the necessary resources and interventions to support the student's growth and address any underlying issues. However, in certain situations, a short break from the school environment may offer the student a chance to reflect on their actions and return with a renewed focus.

As an administrator, my priority is the safety, well-being, and academic success of every student in our school. While we work diligently to create a positive school climate, there are occasions when a student's behavior jeopardizes that climate. The proposed changes in LD 165 provide the necessary tools and flexibility to respond appropriately to such situations, ensuring both the safety of the school community and the best interests of the student.

I strongly urge the committee to support LD 165 and the necessary modifications to discipline policies. Thank you for your time and consideration of this important matter.

Sincerely,

Sean Hanson, MSed, CAG School Admin

Hometown: Kennebunk Me 04043

Sean Hanson
Kennebunk
LD 165

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