

Erin Ireland  
Easton Elementary School  
LD 165

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Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs  
c/o Legislative Information Office  
100 State House Station  
Augusta, ME 04333

RE: Support for LD 165 – Ensuring School Safety and Appropriate Student Support

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

I am writing to express my strong support for LD 165, which seeks to restore the ability to suspend students, regardless of grade level, when necessary to ensure the safety of all students and staff until appropriate supports are in place for the student in crisis. As the principal of Easton Elementary School, an elementary school serving a small rural school in Aroostook County, I have seen firsthand the challenges our schools face in addressing severe behavioral crises in a way that prioritizes both student well-being and school safety.

While our educators and support staff are deeply committed to providing inclusive, trauma-informed, and restorative practices, there are times when a student in crisis exhibits behaviors that are not only disruptive but also dangerous to themselves, their classmates, and the adults responsible for their care. Without the ability to remove a student from an unsafe situation when necessary, we risk compromising the safety of all individuals in the school environment, including the student in crisis.

LD 165 is not about punitive discipline; it is about ensuring that proper supports and interventions are in place before a student returns to the classroom. When suspension is necessary, it should be used as a temporary measure while the appropriate behavioral and mental health interventions are identified and implemented. Our schools need the flexibility to make these decisions in the best interest of all students, rather than being forced to keep a student in an environment that may not be safe or supportive for them or their peers.

I urge you to support LD 165 so that schools can continue to prioritize safety while ensuring that students receive the necessary interventions and resources. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Erin L. Ireland  
Principal, Easton Elementary School