



## **Sylvio J. Gilbert Elementary School**

**Dr. Christina Boursaw**  
Principal

**Kendra Lakeman**  
Dean of Students

**Sharon Fowler**  
LCSW

**Alicia Lemar-West**  
School Counselor

**Kathy Doyle**  
School Secretary

**Amber Flint**  
School Secretary

**TO: Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs**  
**FROM: Christina Boursaw**  
**RE: In Support of LD 165: An Act to Allow School Boards to Expel or Suspend Students Regardless of Grade Level**  
**DATE: March 13, 2025**

Senator Rafferty, Representative Murphy, and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs, my name is Dr. Christina Boursaw. I am the Principal at Gilbert School in Augusta and the 2025 National Distinguished Principal representing Maine. I am writing to express my support for the passage of LD 165. As an elementary school principal, I have seen firsthand the challenges of administrators being stripped of an essential tool for maintaining a safe and effective learning environment.

The current policy has created unintended consequences that hinder our ability to ensure a safe school climate. Schools have an obligation to balance the needs of all students, and there are instances where behaviors pose a direct risk to the safety and well-being of students and staff. Without the option to suspend, building administrators have limited recourse to protect the learning environment and ensure accountability for serious behavioral infractions.

Furthermore, when used appropriately and as a last resort, suspensions provide an opportunity for intervention. Removing this tool has sometimes resulted in prolonged disruptions to classroom learning and an increased burden on teachers and staff who must manage unsafe behaviors without sufficient means of effectively addressing them. This change would allow building administrators the flexibility to make professional decisions on a case-by-case basis while continuing to prioritize positive behavioral supports and restorative approaches whenever possible.

Please consider the perspectives of educators who work directly with students and who are best positioned to determine when suspension is necessary for the greater good of the school community. Providing administrators with discretion in these rare but significant cases is not about punitive measures but about ensuring the safety, order, and quality of education that all students deserve.