

Glenn Davis
Maine State Ballet
LD 134

Testimony Opposing SP 70 LD 134 – An Act to Require Background Checks for
Child Dance Class Instructors

Submitted by Glenn Davis
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Senator Ingwersen, Representative Meyer, and members of the Joint Standing
Committee on Health and Human Services,

My name is Glenn Davis, and I am Managing Director at Maine State Ballet, Maine's largest dance school, and have been in leadership positions here for the past 25 years. I am submitting testimony in opposition to LD 134, "An Act to Require Certain Individuals Who Instruct Children Under 18 Years of Age in Dance or Creative Movement to Undergo a Criminal Background Check."

First, I want to emphasize that the safety and well-being of children in dance programs is of the utmost importance to me and to the entire staff at Maine State Ballet. However, this bill creates unnecessary regulatory burdens without addressing an existing problem. In my 25 years of experience, I have never knowingly encountered a situation where a dance teacher abused a student at our facility. Dance schools are already highly motivated to ensure the safety of their students through careful hiring practices, oversight, and close relationships with families. Additionally, we have windows in our dance rooms, often use assistant teachers, and give annual training to our staff, among other preventative measures.

Key Concerns:

1. Unnecessary Regulation Without Justification

There is no evidence of a systemic problem in Maine's dance schools to my knowledge that warrants this level of government intervention. Background checks for instructors in public school settings are understandable because of the state's responsibility to regulate public education. However, private dance schools operate differently, and imposing these requirements will add unnecessary cost and administrative burden without clear benefits.

2. Burden on Dance Schools and Hiring Challenges

Dance schools already face significant challenges in recruiting and retaining qualified instructors. Background checks can be expensive and time-consuming, which will further deter skilled instructors from seeking positions in dance education. Additionally, the prospect of potential licensing requirements, as suggested in the bill's report section, would make it even harder to staff dance schools, particularly in rural areas where the pool of available teachers is limited.

3. Impact on Small, Independent Dance Programs

Many independent dance studios operate on tight budgets. Adding background check fees and administrative costs would place a disproportionate burden on smaller programs, potentially driving up tuition for families or forcing schools to reduce class offerings. This could limit access to dance education, particularly for underserved communities.

Conclusion

In summary, while protecting children is a shared priority, LD 134 introduces unnecessary regulation without evidence of a problem. It risks creating staffing shortages, increasing costs, and limiting access to dance programs for Maine's youth. I urge the committee to reject LD 134 and to avoid imposing licensing requirements that would only make it harder to provide high-quality dance education in Maine.

Thank you for your time and attention. I am happy to answer any questions you may

have.

Sincerely,
Glenn Davis