



Maine E911 Advisory Council

MEMORANDUM

TO: Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs

FROM: Maine E911 Advisory Council

DATE: March 11, 2025

SUBJECT: Opposition to LD 168, An Act to Improve Safety in Public Schools by Requiring Silent Electronic Notification Systems in Classrooms

The Maine E911 Advisory Council writes to express our strong opposition to LD 168, "An Act to Improve Safety in Public Schools by Requiring Silent Electronic Notification Systems in Classrooms." While we understand and share the goal of enhancing safety in our schools, we believe LD 168 is not the most effective or efficient way to achieve this goal and could potentially create unintended negative consequences.

Our concerns are based on several key points:

- **Duplication of Existing Systems:** Many schools already have established emergency communication protocols and systems in place, including direct lines to 911, public address systems, and internal communication networks. LD 168 risks duplicating these systems and potentially creating confusion or delays during emergencies.
- **Potential for False Alarms:** Silent electronic notification systems could be prone to accidental activation or misuse, leading to false alarms that divert resources and create unnecessary panic.
- **Automatic Notification of Parents:** LD 168 mandates automatic parent notification for subscribed parents. This notification would likely be a basic emergency alert, lacking any substantive details or instructions. For example, this automatic alert would likely look the same for a fire alarm

activation as it would for an active shooter, or even an accidental activation of a panic button. This eliminates the possibility of a coordinated message from school administrators and public safety personnel to parents. Such messages should provide critical information and instructions, allowing parents to make informed decisions guided by officials. Instead, the automatic notification forces parents to act independently, potentially interfering with public safety response efforts.

- **First Responder Work Load:** The influx of concerned parents at schools during emergencies has been shown to impede first responders and complicate emergency response efforts. Additionally, the anticipated surge in 911 calls following emergency notifications could overwhelm PSAPs, hindering their ability to manage the emergency and obtain crucial information from those directly involved.
- **Technical and Logistical Challenges:** Implementing and maintaining a statewide system of silent electronic notification systems would present significant technical and logistical challenges, including costs for equipment, installation, training, and ongoing maintenance.
- **Integration with Existing 911 Infrastructure:** LD 168 does not adequately address how these systems would integrate with the existing 911 infrastructure. There is a high risk that these systems would not provide the necessary information to dispatchers or would create additional work for dispatchers who are already handling emergency calls.
- **Training and Protocol Issues:** Ensuring consistent training and protocols across all schools in the state would be a major undertaking. Without proper training and protocols, the systems could be ineffective or even detrimental in an emergency.

We believe that existing emergency communication systems, when properly maintained and utilized, are sufficient to ensure the safety of students and staff in our schools. We urge the committee to consider alternative approaches that would address school safety concerns more effectively and efficiently. These alternatives could include:

- Enhancing training for school staff on existing emergency procedures
- Improving communication and coordination between schools and local first responders
- Investing in upgrades to existing communication systems and infrastructure

We appreciate the opportunity to provide input on this important issue. We are available to discuss our concerns in more detail and to work with the committee to find solutions that truly enhance school safety in Maine.

Sincerely,

Joseph Thornton, ENP
Maine E911 Advisory Council Chairman