

Deb Davis
Portland
LD 165

Good evening, Senator Rafferty, Representative Murphy, and distinguished members of the Education and Cultural Affairs Committee,

My name is Deb Davis. I am the parent of two college-age children who recently graduated from Falmouth schools. I've also been an education advocate, working with families across the state for the past 16 years.

Please oppose passing LD 165, An Act to Modify Discipline Policies in Maine's Public Schools, formerly known as An Act to Allow School Boards to Expel or Suspend Students Regardless of Grade Level.

I am concerned the extra time a principal could add to a suspension would be overused on students with disabilities (SWDs). School suspensions are often ineffective because they don't address the underlying causes of misbehavior. In my experience, SWDs are suspended for misbehaviors that are a direct result of their disability. Those students require the IEP team and the special education disciplinary process to determine what is needed to succeed.

Suspensions can lead to negative consequences like academic decline, increased dropout risk, and higher rates of future problems. Instead of promoting positive behavior, they often create a cycle of exclusion and can disproportionately impact marginalized students like SWDs.

Teachers and administrators who testify in favor of this bill should be asked: What evidence-based proactive programming are you implementing to address behavior?

All districts have free access to the Lives In the Balance and PBIS initiatives through DOE. More information here:

<https://www.maine.gov/doe/learning/specialed/initiatives/pbis>
and here

<https://www.maine.gov/doe/schoolsupports/climate/restraintandseclusion/education>

Here is information from the Office of Civil Rights Data Collection to understand how this bill could disproportionately impact SWDs. Included is a good publication about discipline. If the data were to be collected today, the suspension rates would be even higher for SWDs.

https://civilrightsdata.ed.gov/assets/downloads/2011-12_CRDC-School-Discipline-Snapshot.pdf
and here

<https://civilrightsdata.ed.gov/publications>

LD 165 is confusing and less straightforward than the original rule, Sec. 1. 20-A MRSA §1001, sub-§9. Changing this established law would mean more training that schools can't afford or have the time for. It would be used disproportionality to SWDs. Reactive discipline doesn't work and does not solve the behavior challenges in our classrooms.

Please oppose passing LD 165 and keep the original language in Sec. 1. 20-A MRSA §1001, sub-§9.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

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