



LEWISTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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RE: LD 165

Hello Maine Delegation,

This bill would repeal the 2021 law that prohibited expulsions or longer-term suspensions for students in grade 5 or under. We are aware that there are discussions to modify this language. Adjustments to this legislation would allow local schools, school committees, students, and families due process and time to set up plans to keep other students, staff, and spaces safe. We want to implement plans to grow accountability that aligns to the student's level and skills with the specific intention of growing skills for problem solving strategies, self regulation abilities and have a sense of sanctity of the things we do not do in schools. Longer durations are needed for cool off windows, processing with kids and staff impacted, and setting an example so routines are not established as a result of unintended consequences or negative reinforcements. When we do not have other tools - negative, hurtful, and disruptive behaviors become the norm. We are hearing from so many teachers and parents that safety and the volume of misbehavior are the result of not having the tools, accountability for parents, and expectations in place because legitimate lines cannot be drawn under the current legislation.

There are things in school that are non- negotiable. The behaviors that result in school removal are unacceptable. No parent, staff, or peer of a student should have to wonder if the kid that assaulted them yesterday will be sitting in the class today with no clear rationale as to why. These behaviors are unacceptable, non-negotiable, disrupt the learning environment, and it is time we return to raising expectations with families to better equip their kids for school and the learning environment. Schools will support these efforts with age appropriate activities for accountability and growth. It is time to repeal this legislation and give schools back the ability to let everyone feel safe. Kids have learned to use strategies that cycle with the goal of getting what they want. This can include manageable behaviors all the way to hitting, spitting, biting, kicking, and turning a classroom upside down. Again - unacceptable. We can support additional suspension days and leave expulsion as part of the legislation.

However, expulsion is a specific due process in statute. We have never expelled a student under grade 5 but a local board should have the ability to afford due process and make that decision being mindful there are numerous other protections for students to stay engaged with school even if they face disciplinary action from a school committee/board.

Sincerely,

KJLanglais

K. Jake Langlais, Superintendent