

To: Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs

From: Christina McDonald, Principal Lillian P. Hussey Elementary School

**RE: In Support of LD 165: An Act to Allow Schools 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 Christina McDonald, and I am the principal at Lillian P. Hussey Elementary School. I am grateful for the opportunity to speak before you today and urge you to support the passage of LD 165

As you are aware, the role of education is central to the success of our community and our state. School administrators are committed to providing a safe and supportive environment where every child has the opportunity to learn and thrive. However, schools across the state, are facing significant challenges with behavioral issues that require immediate attention.

One such challenge is the impact of a decision made during the 130th Legislature, which revoked the authority of building administrators to send students home for behavioral issues. While I fully understand and support the importance of keeping students in school and addressing the underlying causes of behavioral problems, this policy change has created challenges for administrators, teachers, and staff.

When students exhibit disruptive or unsafe behavior, it is essential that we address these issues promptly in a way that protects the learning environment for all students. The removal of this authority has made it more difficult for school administrators to manage these situations effectively, placing a significant strain on our staff and resources.

Restoring administrators' ability to suspend students, regardless of grade level, is crucial in helping our schools maintain a safe and effective learning environment. Temporarily removing students from school allows us to develop and implement action plans for both the student in crisis and their classmates. This approach is vital to reducing dangerous behaviors and ensuring the safety and well-being of all students in the school.

As trained professionals, we do not take the decision to suspend students lightly. We work hard to ensure the safety of our schools and to support all students in their educational journey. Restoring this authority will provide us with another tool needed to safely manage our schools and address situations as they arise.

For these reasons, I strongly urge the Committee to vote "Ought to Pass" on LD 165.