



Maine Developmental Disabilities Council

March 14, 2025

Senator Rafferty, Representative Murphy, and Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs: please accept this testimony in Opposition of LD 165, An Act to Allow School Boards to Expel or Suspend Students Regardless of Grade Level

My name is Nancy Cronin, and I am the Executive Director of the Maine Developmental Disabilities Council¹. The Association of California School Administrators published an article titled "Navigating Post-Pandemic Student Behavior." In that article they stated that "many educators noticed significant changes in student behavior, including increased apathy, disrespect, defiance, and cell phone and social media addiction."² **I have been listening to teachers and administrators from all across Maine saying very similar things. What is going on!! The article from the Association of California School Administrators names many of those factors. This problem is not unique to Maine.**

None of the problems associated with increased student behavior will be solved by this bill. In order to improve student behavior, the reason for the behavior change should be studied, and while that occurs, a variety of tools should be provided to teachers and administrators. I believe LD 165 should either not be passed or changed into a resolve. The resolve could bring a majority of teachers together with representatives from administration, advocates, and parents to recommend a broad approach. This group should discuss how to develop a scaffolding of responses to behavior including both educational strategies and natural consequences. I am not opposed to a child missing 5 minutes of recess if that is required to address a natural consequence. I oppose using recess as punishment. There is a subtle, but important, difference between consequence for behavior and flat out punishment. In addition to natural consequences how can we better support our front-line staff? What system of supports need to be put in place to support educators? Lastly the taskforce should recommend any legislative remedies necessary and authorize this body to put in new LDs.

Thank you for your time and attention

Sincerely,

Nancy Cronin
Maine Developmental Disabilities Council.

¹ Councils on Developmental Disabilities were created through the Developmental Disabilities Assistance and Bill of Rights Act (DD Act) in 1970. Maine's DD Council has been advocating with and for individuals with developmental disabilities for over 50 years. The DD Council is a federally funded, independent organization with members from across the state, including persons with disabilities, family members, and representatives of public and private agencies which provide services and/or funding for services for individuals with developmental disabilities. As required in federal law, we are involved in advocacy, capacity building and systemic change activities, with the goal that individuals with developmental and other disabilities of all ages are fully included, integrated, and involved in their communities and the decisions impacting their lives.

² Macias, Oscar (2024) [Navigating Post-Pandemic Student Behavior: Strategies for Teachers and School Administrators](https://content.acsa.org/navigating-post-pandemic-student-behavior-strategies-for-teachers-and-school-administrators/) Resource Hub Accessed at <https://content.acsa.org/navigating-post-pandemic-student-behavior-strategies-for-teachers-and-school-administrators/> on March 14, 2025