

**Testimony in opposition of LD 165**  
**to the Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs**  
March 15, 2025

Senator Rafferty, Representative Murphy, and distinguished members of the Committee:

My name is Sarah Johnson and I am a resident of Sanford.

I am writing in opposition of LD 165, An Act to Allow School Boards to Expel or Suspend Students Regardless of Grade Level.

This broad legislation to target children and remove them from educational and social environments does not support the well being of anyone. A child demonstrating behavior that may be perceived as “deliberately disobedient or deliberately disorderly” or dangerous on any level is most likely experiencing trauma in their life. Isn’t it our responsibility to help that child, and their family, in whatever ways are needed to reduce and rectify the trauma? What is needed is of course more support services for our children, but unfortunately we are currently decimating the healthcare system on every level by not funding it.

This is a stressful time for all economically and socially. We seem to be trying to resolve that stress with punitive actions. The language of this bill is all about direct punishment, and the resolution is to readmit the child when there is “satisfactory evidence” that the behavior “will not likely recur”. The bill offers no support or even suggestions on how to help the child. Only how to punish them. There is no language in the bill to support the child during expulsion, creating the additional stress of falling behind in class work during this indefinite expulsion.

School is the environment where our children learn how to handle conflict and treat others. We owe our children a better model than this. Restorative programs and processes should be implemented.

As Stated in the [October 2024 American Academy of Pediatrics Policy Statement on School Suspension and Expulsion](#):

“American Indian/Alaska Native students, Black students, students whose caregivers have low socioeconomic status, male students, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer or questioning students, and students with disabilities are disproportionately disciplined with suspension and expulsion. In addition, exclusionary school discipline in the preschool period can be harmful to early childhood development. Children and adolescents affected by exclusionary school discipline are at higher risk for dropping out of high school and for involvement with the juvenile justice system. Both of those experiences are associated with a worse profile of physical and mental health outcomes. A multidisciplinary and trauma-informed approach to reducing exclusionary school discipline practices is described. “

I hope you will oppose this legislation with a vote of ‘ought not to pass’.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sarah Johnson

Sanford, Maine.

<https://publications.aap.org/pediatrics/article/154/4/e2024068466/199495/School-Suspension-and-Expulsion-Policy-Statement>