



Dear Senators and Representatives on the Education and Cultural Affairs Committee,

My name is Elizabeth Andersen. I have been an educator for my entire adult life and a school librarian for over 20 years. I served as a high school librarian for 15 years and I am currently working as a PK-4 Library Information Integrator. I am also the current President of the Maine Association of School Libraries (MASL) which represents school library staff from every corner of Maine. I am writing to urge you to vote Ought Not to Pass on LD 1395. This legislation proposes solutions to a problem that does not exist and has the potential to censor information and curtail access to information for Maine students.

The databases used in school libraries in Maine, some of which are provided by the Maine State Library and some of which are funded by local districts, are age-appropriate for the grade levels to which they serve. These databases from well-known companies, such as Britannica, Gale, EBSCO, and Capstone, are curated and managed by professionals in accordance with state and federal laws to provide students with valid and reliable information that align with state educational standards. In addition, school districts use a variety of filters to protect against students accessing inappropriate material.

LD 1395 presents contradictory ideas. It proposes, on one hand, to educate students about human trafficking, sexual abuse, and exploitation, but it also wants to censor this content from a school library resource. For those who are concerned about students having access to information, I would suggest that the safety of the well-curated and filtered school database accessed on school device, is far safer than a search on personal device on the open-web.

In addition, we have a proud tradition of “local control” in Maine. School districts are responsible for maintaining local challenge policies and opt-out procedures that provide parents/guardians the right to manage their own student’s access to certain materials. Previous legislation which attempted to restrict content from school libraries and curriculum based on personal and political beliefs was defeated. In Maine, it has been upheld that no one individual or small group can limit age-appropriate and curricular-relevant content to students in Maine.

Sincerely,
Elizabeth Andersen
MASL President
Portland Resident