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My name is Judy Cohen and I am working for RSU 20 as the McKenney Vento liaison. I am a masters level Social Worker and have been employed in this district for over 30 years. I am in support of this bill for the following reasons. . .

1. Many youth over the years I have known through working in Maine Public schools for over 35 years do leave their home usually for good reason.
2. I think letting the parent of guardian know they are safe without forcing the child back to the home is a way to de-escalate the situation.
3. What I have done is always let the police know ahead what is happening as long as the teen isn't coerced by the police to return home.

A situation like this arose just yesterday. . . A 14 almost 15 year old special needs student left the home of her biological father because of the father's behavior which included becoming physical with her. Exactly what happened I must depend on what the student says. She went to a friend's home and called to tell me. I spoke to the friend's mom and let her know that she is doing nothing illegal and coached her what to say should the father or a police officer come to her apartment. The stepmom of the student who is no longer living with the father called the police proactively. So I have always done this or a functional adult in the student's life (like in this case) can do so.

My only concern is if the legal parent/guardian is violent or threatening perhaps they should be told that their child is safe but in some situations not be told where the child is staying in order to protect the host home and family.