

Elizabeth Crouse
Winslow
LD 1097

Senator Rafferty, Representative Murphy, and distinguished members of the Education and Cultural Affairs Committee,

My name is Elizabeth Crouse. I am an Educational Technician I at Winslow Elementary School, and I am a resident of Winslow. I am here today to testify in strong support of LD 1097, a bill that represents a critical step toward equipping school personnel with the necessary skills to effectively manage and de-escalate challenging and sometimes dangerous behaviors in the classroom.

Although I have been in this role for just one year, that time has been eye-opening. I have witnessed firsthand the impact of staffing shortages, unmet student needs, inconsistent communication, and varied expectations. These are complex, systemic issues—but LD 1097 addresses a foundational piece that can have a tangible and immediate impact: training.

In my K–2 Life Skills classroom, the reality is stark. By 9:00 a.m., we typically have 10 students across three grade levels, all of whom require one-on-one support.

However, we only have three Ed Techs and one teacher. When a behavioral crisis occurs—and it often does—it can leave the majority of students without guidance, routine, or support. It's a domino effect: one student's crisis can escalate into a classroom-wide disruption.

Despite these challenges, I want to emphasize how incredible these students are. I've had the opportunity to work one-on-one with every student in our classroom, and I can say with absolute certainty that they are thoughtful, caring, curious, and full of potential. What's most difficult as an educator is watching us fall short—not because of a lack of effort or compassion, but because we lack the tools and training we need to respond effectively.

LD 1097 provides a path forward. Comprehensive training in de-escalation and behavior intervention strategies would not only better prepare educators like myself to handle crises, but would also help foster consistency and structure across our schools. Imagine a system where students receive consistent behavioral expectations and interventions from the very beginning of their education—where every staff member is equipped with the same language, tools, and strategies. That's not just classroom management; that's foundational support for both students and staff.

We are not asking for additional funding or staffing—although those needs are real. We are asking for the opportunity to become better prepared, more unified, and more effective in supporting our students. This bill represents a critical step in that direction.

I urge you to support LD 1097. Thank you for your time, your attention, and your commitment to Maine's students and educators.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth Crouse
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