



April 28, 2025

RE: LD 1647- An Act to Amend the Maine Human Rights Act to Provide Additional Remedies for Educational Discrimination

Dear Members of the Judiciary Committee:

My name is Lynn Currier Stanley, and I am the Interim Executive Director of the National Association of Social Workers, Maine Chapter. I am writing to express strong support for LD 1647: An act to amend the Maine Human Rights Act to provide additional remedies for educational discrimination. This bill represents a crucial step forward in ensuring a safe, equitable, and supportive learning environment for all children and adolescents in Maine.

Severe harassment and discrimination can have a profound and lasting impact on the developing minds and well-being of our young people. Childhood and adolescence are critical periods of social, emotional, and cognitive growth. Research consistently demonstrates that the experience of harassment or discrimination, can derail healthy development in significant ways and result in a range of negative outcomes for youth. Students may experience increased anxiety and depression, feelings of isolation, and diminished self-worth. Academically, students may experience difficulty concentrating and avoid school, significantly interrupting their educational engagement. Additionally, the *Journal of Health and Social Behavior* documents the long-term psychological distress associated with experiences of discrimination in adolescents such as impacts to mental health, relationships, and overall life trajectory.

It is imperative that our legal framework provides meaningful avenues of redress for students who have endured discrimination and harassment in educational settings. The current remedies for violations of the Maine Human Rights Act do not adequately address the complex and long-term harm inflicted by such experiences. LD 1647 seeks to adequately deter unlawful discrimination and ensure that students who have been harmed have access to appropriate support and justice. Students and their families should not bear the whole cost of unlawful discrimination against them. LD 1647 would not open the floodgates for litigation. Rather, victims of severe discrimination whose case cannot be resolved through informal advocacy, collaborative problem solving, and early settlement, can seek appropriate redress.

NASW ME strongly urges you to vote in support of LD 1647.

Respectfully submitted,
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