



Maine Education Association

Jesse Hargrove President | Beth French Vice President | Jaye Rich Treasurer
Rebecca Cole NEA Director | Rachelle Bristol Executive Director

Testimony

In Opposition To

LD 1881: An Act to Ensure the Rights of Parents of Minor Children in Education

Jesse Hargrove, President, Maine Education Association

Before The Education and Cultural Affairs committee

May 12th, 2025

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

My name is Jesse Hargrove, I am a high school social studies teacher on leave serving as President of the Maine Education Association representing 24,000 members ranging from pre-k through higher education. I write in opposition to *LD 1881, An Act to Ensure the Rights of Parents of Minor Children in Education*.

This bill insinuates that educators are withholding information about young children from parents. Just the opposite. Educators believe that parents and guardians are an essential component in a student's educational experience. We strive to incorporate parents and build collaborative partnerships before the first day. This bill, while well intended, bypasses more effective and focused redress, and places unnecessary barriers to educating students.

The communication expectations placed upon educators have increased dramatically from the days when the only communication was a handwritten report card with a single letter grade. A call or note home meant the child had misbehaved, and parents always sided with the teacher. Educators are now crafting monthly newsletters, regularly updating web-based platforms like SeeSaw, Google Classroom, IXL, sending emails and making phone calls directly to parents. Unfortunately, we find that parent/guardian contact information, despite regular update requests, is inaccurate. We also go through extreme efforts to open school doors to volunteers, open houses often before the school year even starts, especially for earlier grades, and parent teacher conferences. When my kids were in early grades, we participated in student-led conferences, where my children showed me around the classroom and explored the variety of resources, lesson labs, and work samples, a practice that has become more common in elementary schools. We are transparent, we want parent/guardian involvement, we respect their authority with their children.

However, the components of this bill that require the availability for all materials are unwieldy. It is unrealistic that an educator can provide an adaptable and differentiated curriculum for the varied student needs. Educators plan, do, check, and adjust. We must have the ability to modify lessons and units to meet student needs or reteach when a lesson is unsuccessful. Educators regularly create or find supplemental materials that make learning engaging or relevant based on a specific student interest.

35 Community Drive, Augusta, ME 04330 | 1349 Broadway, Bangor, ME 04401
PO Box 310, Caribou, ME 04736 | 29 Christopher Toppi Drive, South Portland ME 04106

207-622-5866 | 207-888-2070 fax | www.maineaa.org



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However the need to be flexible and adaptable in the moment does not preclude parent participation and transparency. We encourage parents and guardians to be in regular communication with their child's educators. We want students to engage their parents in homework or learning activities. Furthermore, parents can work with their children's teachers to obtain more information, to preview materials in advance, and to make accommodations requests. Parents and guardians can also work through local administration and school committee to enact more responsive practices.

We are already dealing with a perfect storm of events in public education – staffing shortages, budget shortfalls, and challenging working conditions. This bill in its most optimistic interpretation questions the professionalism of schools, administrators, and educators. It injects significant burdens, that would negatively impact student engagement and learning. We urge the Committee to oppose LD 1881.

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