

To: Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs

From: Faith Boninger

Re: In support of LD 2052: Resolve, to Study the Use of Technology in Classrooms and Study Safeguards Related to Its Use

Date: January 21, 2026

Senator Rafferty, Representative Murphy, and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs. My name is Dr. Faith Boninger. I am a research professor at the University of Colorado Boulder's National Education Policy Center. My research for over a decade has examined the nature and effects of digital technologies in schools. I support LD 2052 because it enables the state of Maine to collect the information necessary to make important decisions about how students will be asked to use these technologies and how schools ought to protect their students from the risks such use entails.

Contrary to the schools we and even our children attended, American schools today use digital educational ("ed tech") platforms to organize and provide curriculum content, structure classroom teaching and student collaborations, assess and track student learning, facilitate teacher and school communication with parents and guardians, and more. There are now vanishingly few facets of teaching and learning in schools that are not in some way shaped by digital platforms such as Google Workspace for Education, Kahoot!, Zearn, Khan Academy, MagicSchool, and countless others. Some districts, like the Boulder Valley School District, where my university is located, have approved hundreds of platforms for teachers to use. Others use much fewer. Some districts have strict vetting policies in place; others do not. The extent and nature of vetting is highly influenced by state requirements.

For these reasons, it is essential for the state to study and understand the platforms that students are asked to use, for what purposes, and for how long. It is also essential for the state to understand the possible risks these platforms present to its young people.

The "ed tech" platforms used in schools, like other platforms used in all domains of modern life, differ in important ways from pre-digital technologies like calculators and televisions, and even from the software of the past. Today's platforms—even those used for explicit educational purposes, and even when supervised by teachers—extract data from their users not only to draw inferences about them. They also seamlessly "interoperate" with other platforms. Although educators tend to think of ed tech platforms as merely

“tools” they adopt for specific, self-contained purposes, these platforms are actually complex ecosystems shaped by competing interests and imperatives that operate out of sight and far from schools.

Research indicates that in addition to whatever use a platform may serve in the school setting, it also collects data that its owner may use in product development and also release into a dense and well-developed marketplace of advertisers, data brokers and investors. A platform that delivers curricular materials to students, for example, may also harvest those students’ usage patterns, performance data, and engagement metrics. All these data points are valuable assets that platform owners can leverage to enhance their own products, reinforce their market advantages, or monetize through third-party data sharing, often without the knowledge or consent of students, families, or educators. Prior technologies served a single educational purpose once purchased and were unambiguously under the control of the schools that purchased them. Platforms used in schools today create digital dossiers of students, “permanent records” that not only follow students in their lives outside the classroom, but also precede them to influence such disparate decisions as what interest rates they will be charged for insurance and whether they will be surveilled for the possibility that they would commit a crime.

Additionally, artificial intelligence (AI) is also currently being promoted as an aspect of ed tech platforms in order to modernizing education and creating a 21st-century workforce. However, while research does not support those supposed benefits, it does indicate that AI amplifies the above-described negative effects of ed tech platforms. The study required by LD 2052 would inform the state about what kinds of protections schools are providing to children to limit the risks presented by AI.

I wholeheartedly support the state of Maine’s efforts to learn about how ed tech is affecting the children in its schools. Thank you for considering this important legislation.

Faith Boninger
Scottsdale, AZ
LD 2052

Please see attached file