

January 27, 2026

Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn and Honorable Members of the Judiciary Committee:

I am writing in whole-hearted support of LD 2106. I am writing from my experience as a part-time associate professor in the UMaine system, however, I want to be clear that I am expressing my personal views and not testifying as a representative of the University System.

I am horrified at the fear reverberating through my community, and the losses endured by immigrant, refugee and asylum seeking families. State violence, and particularly what Masha Gessen described as a [Campaign of State Terror](#) (NYT 1/25/26), will shape individuals and our civil society for many years and even generations to come. But, perhaps with great effort, our shared legacy could be a collective response of care, compassion, defense of human and civil rights and a steadfast refusal of this federal overreach; we could make future generations proud.

As an educator, I am very worried that students (and potential students missing from our campus this semester) are unable to access education because of threats to their safety. Preventing access to education based on race and ethnicity violates our core commitments to equal opportunity and [Title VII of the 1964 Civil Rights Act](#). LD 2106 would help us create some clarity about our shared civil rights and a stronger plan to maintain safety on campus.

I have nightmares about armed agents storming into my classroom. I am committed to cultivating [welcoming](#) and [belonging](#) spaces for all students. However, I am not trained in the level of de-escalation needed if masked men with guns arrive. What would you have me do?

Even if we escape direct violence, [threats](#) matter. Students are [not attending class](#) because of their own fears or because they are unable to find childcare or safe transportation, or are attending to family and community needs. Trauma [reduces our capacity to learn](#), [harms our health](#), and [ruptures public trust](#). Before we can heal from mass violence, we need it to stop. LD 2106 creates zones for a safer public life and opportunities to reconcile and heal.

I am also concerned for my own safety. I've taught for more than 25 years and earn [a little more](#) than \$5,000 per course. This labor of love does not extend to tolerating threats of violence for doing my job, yet they come both from state terror and from civilians who've been empowered to [harass](#) and [threaten](#) individuals and communities deemed "[other](#)." Education is one antidote to dehumanization, and we must protect the right for all of us to access Higher Ed.

Despite my personal fears, my hope is that you unanimously and joyfully pass LD 2106 and collectively reflect a shared value of civil, constitutional and human rights mattering more than partisan divides or gamesmanship. Take the Pledge of Allegiance to heart - "[One Nation, under God, Indivisible, with Liberty and Justice for All](#)" - and protect all of us from terror campaigns.

Thank you
Kimberly Simmons, PhD

Sources linked above:

Masha Gessen: <https://www.nytimes.com/2026/01/24/opinion/state-terror-has-arrived.html>

Title VII <https://www.eeoc.gov/statutes/title-vii-civil-rights-act-1964>

Also: <https://www.mainelegislature.org/legis/statutes/5/title5sec4602.html>

Welcoming America: <https://welcomingamerica.org/>

John Powell on Belonging <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aQjRab1Kbto>

Also: Institute on Othering and Belonging <https://belonging.berkeley.edu/>

Threats Matter: <https://phys.org/news/2025-12-mass-violence-trauma-socially-ways.html>

Absenteeism - <https://www.nytimes.com/2026/01/27/us/maine-ice-immigrant-students.html>

Also: this study is from California <https://www.pnas.org/doi/10.1073/pnas.2510395122>

<https://www.pressherald.com/2026/01/27/we-will-need-to-continue-to-rely-on-each-other-maine-schools-react-to-increased-ice-enforcement-2/>

Trauma and Learning :

<https://www.nea.org/nea-today/all-news-articles/trauma-immigration-raids-leave-classrooms>

Fear and Health: https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/how_fear_hurts_us

Fear, Violence, Public Trust :

<https://www.rand.org/pubs/commentary/2024/12/on-reducing-public-fears-and-threats-of-political-violence.html>

PAFTA pay scale <https://www.maine.edu/human-resources/labor-relations/>

Targeted Harassment of Faculty:

<https://www.aaup.org/issues-higher-education/political-attacks-higher-ed/targeted-harassment-faculty> & <https://www.apa.org/education-career/k12/violence-educators>

Othering: <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC11332176/>

Pledge of Allegiance

https://www.ushistory.org/documents/pledge.htm?srsId=AfmBOoqLcNqKpudugK_xeYUd5yS2wpyNikA16tkFkkHTfCxd2jpDwomr