

savannah mirisola-sullivan
Portland
LD 2106
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Portland, ME
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Good morning Representative Kuhn, Senator Carney, and Honorable Members of the Judiciary Committee. Thank you for your time. My name is Savannah Mirisola-Sullivan, and I'm a resident of Portland, Maine. I am here to share my support for LD 2106, An Act to Prohibit the Disclosure of Nonpublic Records Without Proper Judicial Review.

I've worked in public schools for eighteen years. While I stepped away from the classroom last year to be able to care for myself and my family, I am still invested in my school community. Teaching felt like an already impossible job with curricular demands, behavioral needs, threats to funding, staffing shortages, attacks on DEI and special education, and lack of material resources for classrooms and families. But the intensity has reached a fever pitch. I have never witnessed more palpable fear from schools than I have as Operation Catch of the Day ravages our communities. Schools are spending time and energy creating safety plans rather than lesson plans, and no amount of care, compassion, or community circles can ease the fear that students are holding. Right now, chairs in classrooms sit empty because students have been kidnapped by ICE. Families are also keeping their children home, too afraid to risk the commute to school after a Portland parent was arrested in the school driveway after he dropped his child off in the morning. Just yesterday, my dear friend said, "I have a student who hasn't been to school in weeks because of ICE. His classmates are really scared that he was taken away. I need to be there everyday to help them through this."

Neuroscience helps us understand the impacts of this kind of fear, stress, and trauma on young people's development. Cortisol blocks critical parts of the brain, making it impossible for students to engage in, process, and store new learning, or to access critical executive functioning skills like impulse control, working memory, and attention. Trauma, caused by experiences like extreme fear, family separation, violence at the hands of law enforcement, and deportation back to life-threatening circumstances, causes long-term impacts on healthy brain development. This is a public health crisis.

In addition to witnessing the actions of ICE agents in our streets, this fear has also been stoked by policy changes. One of the first actions of the Trump administration was to eliminate a federal policy that prohibited ICE enforcement actions at places like schools and hospitals. This longstanding bipartisan policy had ensured that all people could access crucial public services and meet their basic human needs without fear. It protected students' right to learn, and made sure that all children, regardless of immigration status, could access the other critical resources that schools provide including food, warm clothing, counseling, and a sense of stability and routine.

All children deserve to learn in safety, and trust that adults in their community will keep them safe. LD 2106 helps to ensure our schools remain sanctuaries for students, families, and educators alike, by providing clarity at the state level that immigration officers are prohibited from entering these locations without a valid judicial warrant, and workers at these places are not allowed to provide voluntary consent to all immigration officers to enter. Thank you for the opportunity to share my experience with the Committee. I urge you to vote "Ought to pass" on LD 2106 in support of teachers and students. Thank you.