

Timothy Surette
Bangor
LD 2106

Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn, and members of the Committee on Judiciary, thank you very much for this opportunity to provide written testimony in support of LD 2106: An Act to Prohibit the Disclosure of Nonpublic Records without Proper Judicial Review.

My name is Tim Surette, I'm an associate professor of education at the University of Maine at Augusta, chair of the Bangor School Committee, and a former school administrator and middle school science teacher at public schools in Maine.

I'm testifying today as a private citizen and do not represent the views of my employer or any organization to which I belong.

It is well documented that youth mental health has been in decline for many years here in Maine and throughout the United States. According to the 2023 Maine Integrated Youth Health Survey, 32.7% of adolescents reported symptoms of depression and 21.8% considered suicide. Maine's public schools serve a critical role in supporting the psychological, social, and emotional health of children by providing them access to engaging learning opportunities, school-based mental health services, and most importantly caring and trusted teachers, coaches, mentors, and school counselors.

It is also well documented that the recent surge in ICE activity in Maine is terrorizing families and causing them to keep their children home from school. According to a recent article in the Portland Press Herald, "more than 1,100 students in the state's largest district, Portland, were absent on Friday [January 23rd]. That number was higher for certain racial groups, and included almost half of the multilingual student population. Westbrook, South Portland and Biddeford have also reported attendance drops."

Maine's youth belong in school where they can thrive in a safe, nurturing, and engaging environment. LD 2106 will help ensure this by restricting U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) access to schools, healthcare facilities, daycare facilities, and libraries without a judicial warrant.

Thank you reading and considering this testimony supporting the passage of LD 2106.