

Julia Edwards

Regarding LD 2106: An Act to Prohibit the Disclosure of Nonpublic Records Without Proper Judicial Review  
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My name is Julia Edwards, and I am a Maine public schools employee and mother of two children who attend Maine's public schools. I am testifying in support of **LD 2106: An Act to Prohibit the Disclosure of Nonpublic Records Without Proper Judicial Review** because I think it is a necessary measure to protect educational integrity, teacher presence, and above all, student well-being and school safety.

As a former student of Maine public schools and as a teacher in Maine public schools for the past 13 years, I have been grateful for the safety I feel every day, thanks to the careful planning and resource management of our administrators and local law enforcement. In my experience, Maine has done well to ensure the safety of its students and staff through high-quality, well-researched training programs such as ALICE, and by allocating resources to hire well-trained and experienced School Resource Officers & Deputies. It is clear that Maine takes student safety seriously, as safety is the foundation of any effective learning environment. As a state and as local entities, we have spent large sums of money to ensure the safety (both physical and mental/emotional) of our students. We have taken great care to keep members *of our own communities* from entering school buildings without prior permission, knowing that their presence could be, at the least, disruptive to the learning environment and, at the most, potentially harmful to our students.

Allowing federal agents to enter non-public areas of school buildings without warrants would drastically undermine these safety efforts for the following reasons, which do not constitute a complete list:

- The current surge in hiring for these federal agents has resulted in many under-trained agents who have demonstrated a lack in de-escalation strategies, as mentioned by former Secretary of Homeland Security Jeh Johnson, who also used words like “ill-trained, hot-tempered, undisciplined” in a recent interview to describe the agents currently in the field.
- The objective of recent surges in operations by these federal agents has been described as a targeted mission seeking the “worst of the worst,” referring to dangerous criminals. It is highly unlikely that our students and staff could be categorized as such, regardless of their citizenship status. Adults working in schools need citizenship verification (such as an I-9) or legal equivalent, background checks, and fingerprint records. Children receiving education in schools should certainly not be on a target list for major crimes, and should not have to be exposed to the trauma they would endure if they were to be present for any arrests.
- All students could be negatively impacted without greater restrictions in place to communicate their level of protection. Regardless of their citizenship status, all children deserve a right to feel safe and protected in their school environment.
- The public perception -- which has not been denied by the federal government at this point -- is that detainees are not always offered the opportunity to prove their citizenship or legal status (such as asylum, green card, visa, etc.). This means that members of our communities who are law-abiding and here legally live in fear of erroneous detentions and are therefore not accessing the education, life essentials, and healthcare that they need in order to be thriving and contributing members of our communities.

All of the institutions listed in LD2016 (schools, hospitals, day care facilities, and libraries) have been historical places of safety for people of all identities, due to a conscious effort to make them so. More importantly, they

are all places where our *children* can be found. If we can not offer greater protections to our children, what can we offer? The decisions we make in these moments will ripple and amplify as the children of this time grow to be the decision-makers.

This bill is clear in its indications that a warrant would allow for the presence of federal agents in these spaces should there be *legal justification* for a detainment. I do not see this bill as interfering with legal, federal operations. Rather it is an opportunity to offer another layer of protection for our children.

Because of the reasons listed above along with many others, I strongly urge you to **support and pass LD 2106** so that our teachers can work confidently, our students can continue to learn, and our neighbors of all colors, *especially the children*, can access the education and care that they deserve as human beings.

Thank you for your time and consideration. As a teacher and parent, I am grateful for the work you do to support our state and its people.