



February 4, 2026

Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs

Re: LD 2172 Resolve, Regarding Legislative Review of Portions of Chapter 33: Rule Governing Physical Restraint and Seclusion, a Major Substantive Rule of the Department of Education, State Board of Education

Chair Rafferty, Chair Murphy, and Distinguished Members of the Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs

My name is Carrie Woodcock, and I serve as the Executive Director of Maine Parent Federation (MPF), Maine's federally funded Parent Training and Information Center and Family-to-Family Health Information Center. As both a parent of two young adults with different abilities and the leader of an organization that supports families statewide, I appreciate the opportunity to provide our written testimony.

MPF submits testimony neither for nor against LD 2172. Our comments focus specifically on the proposed changes to reporting requirements within Chapter 33: Rule Governing Physical Restraint and Seclusion, adopted pursuant to 20-A M.R.S. §4502(5)(M), which directs the Department of Education to establish standards governing the use of physical restraint and seclusion in Maine schools.

MPF does not support the unnecessary use of physical restraint in public schools and does not support the use of seclusion at any time. While we acknowledge the Committee's prior approval of revisions to Chapter 33, we are submitting testimony to express significant concerns regarding the removal of reporting requirements for certain types of physical contact.

Under current Chapter 33, a *physical escort* is defined as "*the temporary touching or holding of the hand, wrist, arm, shoulder or back for the purpose of inducing a student to walk to a safe location*" (Chapter 33, §2(12)). In practice, however, MPF routinely hears from families and educators that these escorts are often not voluntary and require staff to physically move a student who is resisting or unable to comply. When physical contact is involuntary and used to move or control a student, it meets the definition of physical restraint, which Chapter 33 defines as "*the use of physical force that restricts the free movement of a student's body*" (Chapter 33, §2(11)).

The proposed changes to Chapter 33 would no longer require schools to report these involuntary escorts as restraints. MPF strongly disagrees with this change. When school staff lay hands on a student in a manner that restricts movement—whether labeled an escort or not—parents have a right to be informed. Transparency is essential to ensuring student safety, maintaining trust, and enabling families and schools to work together to address underlying behavioral needs.

The legislative intent behind 20-A M.R.S. §4502(5)(M) and the creation of Chapter 33 was clear: to identify, monitor, and reduce the use of restraint and seclusion in Maine schools. Reducing the number of reportable incidents by narrowing definitions or excluding involuntary escorts undermines that intent. Accurate reporting is necessary to understand patterns, implement proactive supports, and prevent escalation. Failure to identify and report these incidents will not reduce restraint—it will simply reduce accountability and increase the likelihood that restraint or seclusion will be used as a reactive measure, contrary to the purpose of the law.

Thank you for your time and for your commitment to Maine's children and families.

Respectfully,
Carrie Woodcock
Executive Director
Maine Parent Federation