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LD 2192

This is testimony in support of LD 2192. Before my retirement I was a teacher at the college level, and now volunteer in the Lewiston public schools. Hiring is always a complicated proposition when someone's professional expertise, capacity to connect with students, and ability to bring something relevant to a department all have to be considered.

But what should not be complicated is the ability to ascertain that students and other staff are more likely than not to be safe in an employee's care. Basic physical safety and trust are fundamental to learning. Frightened and anxious brains are not capable of effective learning. Hiring committees should have not only the right but also the duty to inquire about a candidate's previous misconduct that might endanger that trust and safety. Previous employers should not be able to shield that information from them. LD 2192 seems like a moderate, commonsense way of addressing a potentially catastrophic problem.

It is true that having to investigate even disciplinary processes that exonerated someone might deny an innocent candidate a chance at a job. But I think we have to trust that hiring committees will usually make a fair determination if they are given sufficient reliable evidence. More importantly, we need to consider, in the light of what we know about the devastating lifelong effects of sexual abuse in institutional settings without sufficient accountability, that the sexual victimization of children is a problem worth attacking in every way we can.