

Written testimony in support of:

LD 2192 An Act to Protect Students by Ensuring Schools Have Complete Information About School Employees and Applicants for Employment

Joanne Abrams

Portland, ME

Member, Board of Directors NC S.E.S.A.M.E - National Center to Stop Educator Sexual Abuse Misconduct and Exploitation

February 24, 2026

Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs

Senator Rotundo and Distinguished Members of the Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs,

My name is Joanne Abrams, and I am representing myself as I provide support for LD 2192. I am writing as a board member of NC S.E.S.A.M.E. (National Center to Stop Educator Sexual Abuse Misconduct and Exploitation) and as a family member of survivors of educator sexual abuse.

I grew up in a family of educators and went on to become one myself. I understand the gravity of the public trust to not only educate students but to provide a safe place for them to grow and thrive socially and emotionally. In my 20-plus-year career as a K-12 school counselor in Maine public schools, I taught safe touch and personal boundaries as part of my curriculum.

My mother founded NC S.E.S.A.M.E. in the early 1990's after learning of family members' experiences of educator sexual abuse while in high school. NC S.E.S.A.M.E. has grown from a one-woman letter-writing campaign in our home in New York State to being the leading national voice for the protection of students. Laws and societal understanding of sexual misconduct have changed over the decades, but there is still much work to be done before educator sexual misconduct is eliminated and all children are safe from exploitation at school.

LD 2192 provides critical guardrails to ensure that Maine schools cannot "pass the trash" by quietly allowing a teacher to resign for misconduct, only to be unwittingly hired by another district. This all-too-common practice allows abuse to continue for decades and leaves untold numbers of damaged students in its wake. As we know, fingerprinting only goes so far. Most teachers who exploit students do not have criminal records. It is essential that school administrators be mandated to screen new hires for previous misconduct and for prior employers to disclose that information.

I see that the language in LD2192 includes "sexual exploitation of a minor". I strongly suggest changing that to "sexual exploitation of any K-12 student". Some offenders intentionally wait until the student is 17 (the age of consent in some states) or 18, before initiating sexual contact. The power imbalance and trust relationship a student has with a teacher does not end on his or her 18th birthday.

Thank you for sponsoring this bill. The time has come to stand up for the safety of students in our schools.

Joanne Abrams
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