

Howard Tuttle
RSU 12
LD 2204

Testimony of Howard Tuttle, Superintendent of RSU 12 In Support of LD 2204, “An Act to Allow Schools to Expel Students for Committing Sexual Assault” Before the Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs

Senator Rafferty, Representative Murphy, and members of the Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs, my name is Howard Tuttle, and I am the Superintendent of RSU 12. I am testifying today to offer my support for LD 2204. As a Superintendent, I believe that local school boards need more flexibility and options regarding the placement of students in grades 5 and below who have committed serious violations of board policy. The current Maine statute, Title 20-A §1001(9), makes it very difficult for school districts to remove students from the school setting, even in cases of egregious behavior. This bill fills a critical need by giving school boards a tool to address incidents of sexual assault through an expulsion policy.

LD 2204 states that school boards must adopt a policy regarding the expulsion of any student, of any grade level, who is found to have committed sexual assault on school grounds. The expulsion period must be at least one year, but the Superintendent may, in writing, waive this on a case-by-case basis. Notably, this legislation also states that school boards have the authority to continue providing educational services to an expelled student in an alternative setting, provided that the safety of the victim and the school community is maintained and that the offender is not left entirely without educational support.

Although I am in full support of the flexibility that this bill provides in the case of sexual assault, I would like to ask the Committee to consider broadening the scope of this legislation. School boards should have the same flexibility and options available to them for students in grades 5 and below who display serious and dangerous behavioral issues. By giving school boards more flexibility to deal with a variety of high-risk behaviors, it would be possible to ensure that all students have a safe and supportive learning environment.

Thank you for your time and consideration of this issue.