

**TESTIMONY BEFORE THE JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON CRIMINAL
JUSTICE AND PUBLIC SAFETY**

**LD 405, An Act to Prevent False Reporting Leading to Evacuation, Shutdown or
Lockdown**

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Katya Fromuth, Yarmouth

Chairwomen and members of The Joint Standing Committee, I testify today in **support** of L.D. 405 “An Act to Prevent False Reporting Leading to Evacuation, Shutdown or Lockdown”.

My name is Katya Fromuth and I am in my first year of High School in Yarmouth. Gun violence at schools is an epidemic that has impacted the lives of thousands of children and parents. A study conducted by the Pew Research Center in 2018 found that over 50% of teens fear their school could be the next on news headlines. And, in light of recent events, I can now count myself as one of the 50%. On November 18th, a swatting hoax was called into my high school, resulting in canceled classes. Three days later, I was at my desk during second period when two loud pops echoed through the halls. My first thought was not of construction or noisy classmates. Instead, it was “oh no, is that a gun?”. The fear from that moment was indescribable. I remember thinking to myself, “I’m on the second floor, what if I can’t get to the stairs in time.”

Thankfully, that morning, *the gun* was just a loud paper towel dispenser. However, so many other students haven’t been that lucky. Since November 18th of 2022, at least 14 school shootings **have** taken place, resulting in 11 deaths and many more traumatized children. In less than a hundred days, more people died in a school shooting than in 2015 and 2016 combined.

Because of this, the parents of children around the country are now forced to wonder every morning at school drop off, if the unimaginable will suddenly become far too real. If their child will arrive home safely, or not. When parents, teachers, and especially students have to worry for their lives in a place that is so

fundamental to educating and protecting the next generation, the problem has already become bigger than it ever should have.

However, I'm sure I need not tell you that Maine has gotten lucky. We have not yet fallen victim to a school shooting, only terrifying hoaxes. But since 1999, three hundred thousand children have been in school during a shooting, according to the Washington Post. That statistic, though, does not include the trauma inflicted on children and staff impacted by hoaxes, such as the ones in Sanford or Portland this past November. Even if the threat is fake, the fear is real.

LD 405 would make a call that results in emergency services coming to school, a felony. Doing this would send a message to copycats of hoaxes around the world that we will **not** tolerate any more of this domestic terrorism. Closing the gap that current swatting hoax laws have left with LD 405 is a step our state can take to prove that we will not let our parents, teachers, and children go through what so many others already have.

Thank you for your time.