



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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Testimony of Representative Jennifer Poirier presenting

LD 1953 “Resolution, Proposing an Amendment to the Constitution of Maine to Establish a Parental Bill of Rights

Before the Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary

Senator Carney, Representative Moonen and fellow members of the Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary, I am Jennifer Poirier, and I proudly represent House District 70, which is comprised of Skowhegan. I would normally say that I am happy to stand before you to present this bill, but I am quite saddened that the state of affairs today has caused me to stand before you to present **LD 1953, A Resolution, Proposing an Amendment to the Constitution of Maine to Establish a Parental Bill of Rights.**

For several years, parents in Maine have felt that their rights to raise their children are slowly being eroded. This issue is not unique to Maine. Across the United States, parents are experiencing the same concerns. Sixteen states have now codified Parental Rights into their State Statutes. Our state has an opportunity, through LD 1953, to be the leader in our country and the first to enshrine Parental Rights into our state Constitution.

Parents are their children’s first and very best advocates. No one knows a child better than their moms and dads do.

LD 1953 establishes into our Constitution, a parental right to raise our children how parents see fit, with their own core values and beliefs. Under this amendment, parents have the fundamental right to educate their children, to care for their children, and to raise their children, while still giving the state authority to protect children when necessary, and to provide public education.

It is not the place of the government or any government entity to decide how a child should be raised or what values or fundamental beliefs should be taught in schools. Parents across our state, say they are being shut out of school board discussions on policies and curriculum that directly affect their children. This is unacceptable!

Parents have also stated that they are being denied access to the school records of their children. And that they have been denied knowledge of conversations regarding their child's medical and mental health. How is keeping this information from a parent healthy or even safe for a child?

Our children are not a social experiment. Parents know their children better than any other person. It is time that we promote communication and conversation. It is time to break down the barriers that have been building and focus on family, focus on core education.

In closing, I have to say that my husband and I are fortunate to have raised our seven sons in different times. We had open, candid conversations about behavior, bullying, and curriculum. We had a collaborative understanding and worked with teachers and administrators to ensure our boys had a positive and fulfilling public school education. Our youngest graduated within the last decade. The parents of school aged children need that same relationship today. Our children will all be better for it.

I respectfully ask you to **support LD 1852. The decision of Parental Rights does not belong to the Legislature.** Put this issue to rest once and for all and give parents a voice at the ballot box. I hope the committee will give thought and consideration to this proposal. Thank you for allowing me to present this bill. I would be glad to answer any questions you may have.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jennifer Poirier". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Rep. Jennifer Poirier