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**Testimony of Representative Melanie Sachs in support of
LD 537, An Act to Prohibit the Doxing of a Minor and to Authorize a Related Civil Action
Before the Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary**

Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn and esteemed members of the Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary:

My name is Melanie Sachs, and I am honored to represent the community of Freeport in the Maine Legislature. I am before you today to introduce *LD 537, An Act to Prohibit the Doxing of a Minor and to Authorize a Related Civil Action*.

I have been a licensed clinical social worker for almost 30 years. In my spare time, I volunteered in my community's schools, was a Scout leader and coached kids for almost two decades. I am well aware of the many challenges facing youth at this moment and the need for adults to be supportive as they navigate today's world, including social media.

In October 2023, I was contacted by a constituent and learned an adult in Maine was relentlessly targeting a student in Freeport, through social media posts, website content and podcasts. This adult, who lived hours away from my community, posted repeatedly and negatively about this student and their family. The resulting coverage went not only national, but also international. As a clinician, as a mom, as a human being— I was frankly horrified.

I called the Maine Attorney General's office to ask what recourse this family might have to hold this adult accountable for their actions, and to stop what I described as bullying and atrocious behavior of an adult directed towards a minor. In my discussion with the Maine Attorney General's office at the time, they used the term "doxing" to describe this behavior. Doxing is defined as the knowing disclosure of personal identifying information of a person, without that person's consent, and that disclosure is intended to cause, and in fact either directly or indirectly causes things such as physical harm to that person; serious damage to the property of that person; or causes the person to reasonably fear for their own physical safety or the physical safety of a friend, family member or loved one.

I was surprised and incredulous to learn that there were no Maine statutes preventing an adult from doxing a child. In fact, Maine does not currently have any statutes which impose civil or

criminal penalties for doxing at all. Some states, like Arizona, California, Kentucky, Missouri and Connecticut do impose criminal penalties such as fines and a period of imprisonment, and those protections are given to “all persons.” Other states such as Minnesota and Colorado limit protection to certain professions, like law enforcement or public health workers. Others such as Oregon and Nevada allow only civil actions to be brought addressing doxing. Again, we do not have any of these laws in Maine.

I want to be clear that, as you will learn during the course of this hearing from the testimony submitted and presented, this bill is unfortunately desperately needed. This is not a bill about identifying and protecting one specific group of children or another. Children under 18– of every faith tradition, race, gender orientation, ability or disability, immigration status, ethnicity and age – should not be doxed for any reason by an adult. It is hurtful. It is harmful. And it should not be allowed.

I respectfully ask this committee to unanimously vote Ought To Pass for LD 537.