



GEIGER ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

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TO: Joint Standing Committee - Education & Cultural Affairs

FROM: Cindy Gish, Principal (Geiger Elementary School)

RE: LD 165

DATE: 3/7/2025

Senator Rafferty, Representative Murphy, and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs. My name is Cindy Gish and I am the Principal at Geiger Elementary School in Lewiston. I am here to share my thoughts in support of LD 165.

Elementary schools are supposed to be a place where all students feel safe to learn and grow. Safety is our number one priority for our young learners. When others pose a threat to that - either physically or emotionally - suspension is an appropriate consequence. This sends the message that these behaviors are unacceptable and will not be tolerated in schools. In order for our learning spaces to be conducive to productive learning both academically and socially - we must hold a balance of structure, respect, and discipline. Unfortunately, we have students that are taking that away from others due to laws that are currently in place. We have students that are tearing classrooms apart and not allowing others access to their learning space. We have students that are repeatedly hurting staff. We have students that are refusing to participate in any type of learning and taking time away from others that want to learn & succeed.

This law was enacted without knowing about the unintended consequences. These behaviors monopolize building administrators throughout their days to be dealing with disruptive students rather than focusing on instructional leadership. Also since this change, incidents of dangerous behavior reports in schools have increased. In our 5 elementary schools in Lewiston we have processed over 100 dangerous students reports just this year. In the past two weeks only I have signed off on over 15 staff injury reports alone. This includes kicking, biting, slapping, punching, spitting... all behaviors that are unacceptable and should be non-negotiable in schools. Almost 50% of the students that we have had to suspend have had 2 or more suspensions. I believe that is because we did not have adequate time to put the proper supports in place for a successful return to the classroom.

I do not believe there are any school leaders that want students to be sent home and miss school. I also do not believe that leaders want students to miss out on outside play time with their peers. However, I do believe that we want all students to succeed, to feel safe in their learning environment, and to learn that behaviors do have consequences.

For these reasons, I strongly urge the committee to vote **OUGHT TO PASS** for LD 165.