

DaytonConsolidated

21 Clarks Mills Road
Dayton, MI 45405
207.499.2283
daytonschooldcpr.org

March 13, 2025

Good afternoon Honorable Chair and Members of the Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs. My name is Kim Sampietro and I am the proud principal of Dayton Consolidated School which educates students PreK-5. Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today.

I am now in my 11th year as an elementary school principal. My commitment has always been to create a community where students are in school and receiving the support they need to succeed. The truth is that the rise in dangerous student behaviors and the recent change in policy has created new challenges.

I have personally seen the impact these challenges have on our school community. One of the pieces we talk about in school is dignity. Dignity for all students. I want to be mindful of the experiences I reference as they are sensitive and real. Imagine a half dozen staff members working to manage a student who is throwing chairs, flipping tables and attempting to break windows as students in a class next door are trying to learn. Imagine a student who repeatedly attempts to bolt from the classroom and the school as others walk down the hall to their own classrooms. Imagine a fire being intentionally set while students are in their classrooms trying to learn and students knowing it's one of their classmates who started it. Imagine a student repeatedly verbally targeting another student day in and day out while in the same class.

While I fully support efforts to limit suspensions for young children, schools need the flexibility to address behaviors and create plans that will best support the student in crisis and the larger school community. The time it takes to do this varies from case to case.

In these situations, schools bring together the key individuals best equipped to support the student. This often includes our Behavior Specialist, School Psychologist, Social Worker, and the parents. We are committed to creating personalized intervention plans, fostering family connections, and providing essential behavioral support. However, as mentioned earlier, these plans take time to create and implement effectively. When suspension is not an option or is limited to just three days in extreme cases, staff are often forced to navigate recurring crises without the opportunity to effectively facilitate a smooth reintegration process.

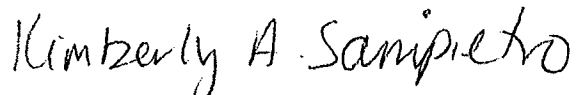
I advocate for amending LD 165 to lift the suspension ban while keeping the expulsion ban in place. This balanced approach enables schools to focus on interventions and restorative practices while also ensuring the safety of both staff and students as we develop strategies that effectively support student needs.

I urge you to consider the insights of educators who work in schools daily. We are dedicated to supporting every child and understand the unique needs, challenges, and dynamics of our

school community. A one-size-fits-all approach fails to address individual needs and the necessary support for both the student and the broader school community.

Thank you for your time and dedication to the education of students in Maine.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kimberly A. Sampietro". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized 'K' and 'S'.

Kim Sampietro, Principal

Dayton Consolidated School