

Testimony in Support of LD 165

March 13, 2025

Good afternoon, Chair Rafferty, Chair Murphy, and Distinguished Members of the Education and Cultural Affairs Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today.

My name is Lindsey Nadeau, and I am the principal of Biddeford Intermediate School. I have proudly served as principal here for six years and previously spent four years at John F. Kennedy School. I am here today because recent policy changes have created new challenges for school administrators, teachers, and—most importantly—our students in achieving success.

The Impact of Limiting Suspensions to Three Days

While I fully support efforts to limit suspension for younger students, I must also prioritize the safety of everyone in the building, which is why the restriction on sending a student home for more than three days while we develop a safety plan presents a significant challenge. As a principal, my number one priority is ensuring the safety of all students and staff—including the student in crisis.

Reintegrating a student after a serious behavioral incident requires multiple steps, including:

- Meetings with the school social worker to assess the student's emotional and behavioral needs,
- Consultation with special education staff to determine appropriate accommodations or interventions,
- Possibly a Chapter 33 hearing to ensure disciplinary measures align with legal and educational standards,
- Threat assessments to evaluate potential risks, and
- Meetings with parents and guardians to discuss safety and support strategies.

When more than two or three of these critical steps are needed, three days is simply not enough time. This policy forces administrators to bring students back before all the necessary safeguards and interventions are in place, jeopardizing the safety of both the student in crisis and the rest of the school community.

Why Local Decision-Making Matters

I strongly support amending LD 165 to restore local decision-making regarding student suspensions. Educators and administrators know their students best—we understand their needs, their challenges, and the dynamics of our school communities. A one-size-fits-all suspension or limitation does not

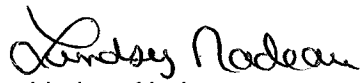
account for the complexities of individual cases and prevents us from making the informed, professional decisions necessary to support both the student and the larger school environment.

By allowing school districts the flexibility to determine appropriate suspension lengths based on each unique situation, we can ensure that interventions are thoughtful, effective, and safe.

A Call to Reconsider

I urge you to reconsider these restrictions and trust the educators who work in our schools every day. We are committed to making decisions that prioritize student well-being, staff safety, and the overall success of our school communities.

Thank you for your time and your dedication to education. I welcome any questions you may have.



Lindsey Nadeau

Principal of Biddeford Intermediate School