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**Testimony of the Maine Public Utilities Commission,  
Emergency Services Communication Bureau**

**Neither For Nor Against**

**LD 168, An Act to Improve Safety in Public Schools by Requiring Silent Electronic  
Notification Systems in Classrooms**

March 13, 2025

Senator Rafferty, Representative Murphy and Distinguished Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs (Committee), my name is Maria Jacques, testifying neither for nor against LD 168, An Act to Improve Safety in Public Schools by Requiring Silent Electronic Notification Systems in Classrooms on behalf of the Public Utilities Commission, Emergency Services Communication Bureau (ESCB).

The ESCB is responsible for implementing and managing Maine's E 9-1-1 system, which includes 9-1-1 call answering equipment, training and 9-1-1 services for all 25 Public Safety Answering Points (PSAPs) in the state. In 2024, there were 585,363 9-1-1 calls processed by our PSAPs.

In Maine, 9-1-1 is available from traditional wireline phones, cell phones, and VoIP phones. Regardless of the type of service, important location information is delivered along with the voice call. All PSAP personnel are trained on how to process a silent call—an open line where no one speaks-- which sometimes happens when a caller is in danger.

Text to 911 is also available. It is designed as an alternative to a traditional call when an individual is hearing impaired or when an individual cannot make a voice call, for example during a home invasion or a medical emergency that renders an individual incapable of speech.

The primary responsibility of a PSAP is to answer all 911 calls in its local coverage area. Each Maine community is matched with a PSAP. Some PSAPs answer calls for just a couple of communities while others answer calls for over 100. In most cases, PSAP coverage areas do not align with school administrative districts. Over the last few years, PSAPs have struggled to maintain staffing levels and if more tasks are added, additional staff may be needed.

L.D. 168 requires a public elementary school or public secondary school that enrolls 12 or more students to equip each classroom with a silent electronic notification system. The silent electronic notification system must automatically notify the 9-1-1 system, school security personnel and local law enforcement agencies when manually activated. The system must also automatically notify parents of students who subscribe to be notified.

The ESCB has the following concerns with the bill as proposed:

1. There are many different silent electronic notification systems on the market. The only ones that could integrate or automatically notify the 9-1-1 system are ones that generate a voice call or text message. We are currently unaware if this type of system is readily available, and if it is available, we are unsure if there would be cost implications to integrate this into the 9-1-1 system.
2. If the intent of LD 168 is to provide an over-the-top service (a service that goes into the PSAP but does not display on the 911 equipment itself), the boundaries of schools do not align with the boundaries of PSAPs so a PSAP could have several different software programs to purchase, install and monitor. Again, we have concerns about the cost implication this service may have on PSAPs. Ideally, all schools should be required to use the same program or at least utilize a common platform at the PSAPs.
3. False alarms often plague these systems. For PSAPs managing many towns (or schools), this could quickly become overwhelming.
4. While we understand the need to provide information to parents, requiring the notification of parent of an activation could cause massive panic, hinder the public safety response, and completely overwhelm the PSAP with inbound calls.

The ESCB is willing to engage in further conversations with the sponsor and stakeholders in order to achieve the goals of this legislation (as well as LD 808) in a manner that minimizes the costs and complications associated with the implementation of LD 168.

I would be happy to answer any questions or provide additional information for the work session.