



STATE OF MAINE
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
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March 13, 2025

Senator Rafferty, Senate Chair
Representative Murphy, House Chair
Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs

Senator Rafferty, Representative Murphy, and Distinguished Members of the Education and Cultural Affairs Committee:

LD 168, An Act to Improve Safety in Public Schools by Requiring Silent Electronic Notification Systems in Classrooms, would require that Maine schools with at least 12 students must equip each classroom with a silent electronic notification system. This system must automatically notify 9-1-1, school security personnel, and local law enforcement agencies when activated.

LD 808, An Act to Require School Boards and Governing Bodies of Approved Private Schools to Implement Wearable Panic Alert Systems, would require that, beginning in the 2026-2027 school year, all school administrative units and approved private schools must implement a wearable panic alert system at each school. This system must be capable of integrating with local public safety to transmit a 9-1-1 call and be capable of initiating a campus-wide lockdown notification.

The Department of Education appreciates the sponsors' recognition that our student safety is a priority. The mission of the Maine School Safety Center is to develop a safe school infrastructure that will deliver high quality, up-to-date nationally recognized practices, procedures, training, and ongoing assistance and support to Maine schools. There are numerous practices and tools that increase school safety and promote a positive school climate for Maine's students. These practices are in place in many Maine schools, based on local community needs and collaboration with local law enforcement partners. To that end, these bills propose the use of tools that have the potential to increase safety at Maine schools and are already available to school administrative units (SAUs) and private schools who wish to adopt them. The Maine School Safety Center can also provide site assessments to help schools assess their safety and security and create protocols that best fit their needs, at no cost to schools.

Implementing these bills could create a costly mandate for Maine schools that would be difficult to estimate. Schools across the state could experience a wide range of costs depending on the age of their school building, choices of wireless or wired security connections, apps for remote monitoring, and computer software. One estimate for computer software carried a cost of \$25,000. Anytime a mandate is considered, costs and benefits must be carefully considered. A

real or perceived sense of greater safety is a benefit that schools may receive under passage of these bills, however passage would also constitute a significant financial burden among Maine's schools, during a time with increasing budgetary pressures on the state, local SAUs, and individual taxpayers. In addition to the cost of purchasing the devices, there is also the cost of installation in school buildings. The average age of Maine's school buildings is 57 years; therefore, installation costs could be considerable. Furthermore, in addition to the cost of purchasing compliant units, there would also be the costs of initial and ongoing training for school staff who would be equipped with these devices. Finally, we anticipate unintended costs for school-wide and law enforcement action in the case of an accidental triggering of the device. These are considerations that must be weighed against the perceived benefits of such a system.

The Department will be available to provide additional information on LD 168 and LD 808 and respond to any questions during the upcoming work session.

Sincerely,

DocuSigned by:

Robert Susi

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Robert Susi

Director, Maine School Safety Center