



Susan Bernard
Senator, District 1

THE MAINE SENATE
132nd Legislature

3 State House Station
Augusta, Maine 04333

**LD 835, "An Act to Allow Children to Participate in Beano Games Conducted by
Nonprofit Charitable Organizations"**

Joint Standing Committee on Veterans and Legal Affairs

Public Hearing

Monday, March 17, 2025, 11:30am

Senator Hickman, Representative Supica, and Esteemed Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Veterans and Legal Affairs:

My name is Sue Bernard; I am the Senator representing District 1, which is comprised of 37 communities in Northern Aroostook County. I am proud to sponsor LD 835, "An Act to Allow Children to Participate in Beano Games Conducted by Nonprofit Charitable Organizations."

LD 835 seeks to allow the many nonprofits and charities across the state to hold events that benefit children and provide some good 'ol fashioned fun.

I decided to submit this bill after the Caribou VFW Chapter contacted me. For years now, the VFW has held fundraisers throughout the year in order to offer a Bingo game for kids at the beginning of the school year. During this event, the families in the community gather and play bingo for free. The prizes handed out are school supplies. We all know school supplies can be quite expensive; and for some of the families in the district, these prizes provide much needed assistance. The VFW also holds an event around Christmas with the aim of providing presents for children. In both cases, each child wins a prize.

As I said, this program has been a staple in our community for years, but this year, the VFW was informed they were in violation of the youth gambling laws. I inquired about this with the Office of Public Safety's Gambling Control Unit (GCU). They informed me that those generous veterans were, indeed, in violation of the law. They suggested the VFW could hold a raffle. While a raffle might give each child a gift, it does not build community in the way the bingo game does. Which is more fun? Going with your family to place a few tickets in a box and leaving, or gathering your family and friends for an evening of fun and fellowship?

Looking forward to playing games, yelling BINGO, and running to the front of the room to claim a Prize!

What I am proposing is not all that different from schools and resort hotel bingo games for children. In fact, it is more restrictive than the laws for schools, which allow a fee to be charged. My proposal allows beano games to be held by nonprofit groups if there are no fees charged and 90% of the group is under 18.

I do not see what the state gains from disallowing children from playing bingo free of charge and getting school supplies. Again, at these events every child wins a prize, our community is strengthened, and families can have a night out. If we do not allow these events, everyone loses. I urge you to vote Ought To Pass.

Thank you for your consideration. I would be happy to take questions.