

Senator Rafferty, Representative Murphy and members of the Education and Cultural Affairs Committee. I am Heidi Sampson, speaking in support of LD 660 *An Act to Provide Transparency and Public Access to Public School Curricula*

Sunshine is the best disinfectant. Transparency is that sunshine for our schools.

Transparency with schools, school boards and administrators is a wildly popular policy among parents throughout Maine. An innovative idea would be welcomed if this committee were to pull back the veil between school systems, parents and taxpayers. Unfortunately, although this is federal law *20 U.S. Code § 1232h*, Maine is **not in compliance**. This bill would resolve that problem.

Parents, taxpayers, policymakers all deserve to have insight into their school's operations, examining data about student performance, how schools spend money, the instruments by which other forms of data are gathered, and so on. Parents, the most important stakeholders, deserve the right to assess all factors in determining how successfully their school system prepares their students for life in college, workforce and beyond. The online transparency portal proposed in this bill would provide parents with access to a host of resources and information such as student test data, curriculum content and classroom materials.

Additionally, and of great importance, is transparency with third-party contractor. Maine's DOE has a long history of subcontracting and partnering with many organizations. Taxpayers should be able to see all the records and their activities in schools. Who is influencing the professional training, culture and climate within our state's schools? Understanding how 3<sup>rd</sup> party contractors influence schools would likely be an eye-opening experience. Unfortunately, schools are not proactively transparent about the vendors they contract with for professional development. More often than not, this information is hidden unless it is specifically requested through the Freedom of Access Act.

Professional development training including social-emotional-learning to guide curriculum expansion and instruction, interestingly enough, is not tolerated in Federal law. It begs the question why we are implementing Social-Emotional-Learning so boldly? These trainings therefore, must be open to the public with at least 3 yrs of online videos. Taxpayers would learn a great deal about what teachers are being coached to teach. It would be very easy to record these trainings and post on any school's website. **Why are we opaque about this approach?**

BTW, every school board is required to pre-approve any outside program coming into schools. The lack of consent to host such influence is also a violation of the federal law. Too many administrators simply opened their doors to organizations pushing agendas without ever checking with their school board.

This committee should be paying attention to the fact the Maine DOE has been put under investigation by the US DOE for leaving parents in the dark. Their lack of transparency is catching up to them. The MDOE was challenged last session for changing the state testing which did not line up with federal requirement. If schools in Maine, under the direction of the MDOE, had three years of student performance data posted online, transparency concerns would be quelled. Unfortunately, at this point, little to no access to such data exists.

Keep in mind, our Commissioner of Education has been dismissive about the falling test scores, stating that academics will have to take a back seat to SEL related materials. This naturally causes parent's great concern. Do you realize this state is in violation of federal law for its lack of disclosure on numerous issues. It's no wonder parents have been in an uproar.

Parents don't know the magnitude of the psychological impact through social emotional learning, trauma induced instructions and other psychological tools used for whole scale manipulation of their children. These all violate federal law. It's time we implement a course correction.

**The federal law is outlined in this bill and it's time Maine schools comply. Now lots of money is at stake the longer we are in non-compliance.**