



Maine Education Association

**Jesse Hargrove President | Beth French Vice President | Jaye Rich Treasurer
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Testimony

In Support Of

LD 660: An Act to Provide Transparency and Public Access to Public School Curricula

Jesse Hargrove, President, Maine Education Association

Before the Education and Cultural Affairs Committee

April 2, 2025

Senator Rafferty, Representative Murphy, and other esteemed members of the Labor Committee,

My name is Jesse Hargrove, I am a high school social studies teacher on leave serving as President of the Maine Education Association representing 24,000 members ranging from pre-k through higher education. I write in opposition to LD 660 An Act to Provide Transparency and Public Access to Public School Curricula. This bill if enacted would put tremendous burden on school district governance to develop and review policy, administration to implement, and staff to comply. As a result, it may give inordinate authority to lawyers drafting policy and corporations developing curriculum, rather than our local educational experts. Furthermore, it severely limits the resources available to educators, impeding the ability to incorporate current events, art, music, or discovery, but even more basically, to provide materials that are engage and of student interest. Furthermore, the bill is unnecessary as public schools have dramatically increased transparency and access to students and families over the last few decades.

First the level of predetermination for curriculum materials hinders flexibility. Educators are constantly evaluating and incorporating materials that will engage students, while challenging them. Expecting educators to “know” students in advance – their strengths, areas of improvement, interests, - would be impossible. The ambiguity and subjectivity of Section 3 would inhibit an educator’s ability to provide students with supplemental materials that make learning relevant. As a social studies educator, it would be challenging to impossible to incorporate current events, to develop news literacy skills, and connect historical themes to contemporary issues. In my programs there were three different projects that would be negatively impacted by this bill. The Stock Market Game, Project Citizen, and Maine National History Day. Each of these projects contains significant student choice, such as crafting a stock portfolio, developing a civic problem and solution, or investigating a historical moment. My role is to build an initial core of knowledge, skills, and analytical tools to start students off. However, as they take control of their learning, developing questions to drive their research, I also help them to incorporate multiple perspectives, refuting or contradictory evidence, as well as corroborating evidence. This may mean sharing documents, past or present, related to that topic, problem, or stock. It would be unreasonable to catalogue each varied source and document for such projects for 100s of students.

Similarly, students may choose projects prohibited under section 3. For example, one of my Project Citizen groups was concerned about student mental health and support. They did considerable research on Maine policies and data, but also the region and nation. In addition, they developed and conducted surveys among their peers in both the high school and Career Technical Center. My colleagues in other disciplines and levels would find similar challenges. This would likely lead educators away from project-based learning, with high degrees of student choice, that develop high level cognitive skills for 21st Century students and towards canned curriculums,

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based on rote knowledge. It would reduce the rigor and relevance that so many of our educators work tirelessly to incorporate.

The professional development reporting requirements are cumbersome and discourage in-house offerings that are responsive to local staff needs. I'm also concerned by the proposed online portal that can be accessed by "3rd party contractors".

This bill comes at a time when schools are more transparent than ever. Gone are the days when a student report card (it was on card stock), handwritten with pen, containing a single letter or number grade. Today's schools post a variety of curriculum resources including complete library catalogues, course syllabi, and programs of study. Students and parents have daily access to progress reporting on formative and summative activities, through student information systems such as Infinite Campus or PowerSchool. These and other school platforms often host daily learning target(s), associated learning activities, and the resources used. Parents can sign up for weekly email updates that are automatically generated by the platforms and sent out at the end of the week. We encourage parents to engage their kids in conversations about their school experiences and learning activities. Furthermore, parents can work with their children's teachers to obtain more information, to preview materials in advance, and to make accommodations requests.

We are already dealing with a perfect storm of events in public education – staffing shortages, budget shortfalls, and challenging working conditions. This bill in its most optimistic interpretation questions the professionalism of schools, administrators, and educators. It injects significant burdens, that would negatively impact student engagement and learning. We urge the Committee to oppose LD 660.