

Good Afternoon,

My name is Shauna Broyer and I stand before you today with my husband and children to show support for bill LD 11. Last school year in September, we had been experiencing a sweltering few days temperature-wise. There seemed to be no relief in sight and my kids were both coming home exhausted from school. Both expressed that their classrooms were hot, especially for my daughter whose classroom was located on the second floor. Teachers had brought in fans that they had had at home or went out and bought, extra breaks were given, and water bottles were passed out by the school administration. Classrooms in our schools had thermostats that were maxed out with temperatures reaching over 94 degrees.

We as a family made the decision to have our children dismissed early and for at least one day we had them stay home all together. We started seeing the effects that these temperatures were having on our own kids. They were exhausted, grumpy, out of breath, and not themselves. Friends of theirs went down to the nurse because they felt sick to their stomach and/or had headaches. We began calling the school and checking on temperatures throughout the day. Both of our children love school, so making the decision to pull them was not an easy one. We know that we were also not alone in that decision, many other parents did the same.

After attending an Open House that week at the school, we as parents experienced exactly how hot those classrooms were. I immediately thought, how are students and teachers functioning in this environment? I was sweating within minutes of being in the rooms and could not wait to leave. This prompted me to start researching what temperature guidelines we had in place for schools and to my surprise, I realized there were none. There are no minimum/maximum temperature guidelines for schools in Maine at all, I knew this had to change.

So began the journey to where I stand today. I reached out to Senator Bennett and I expressed my concerns as a parent and shared with him information, statistics, my emotions, etc. I was so happy to hear back and to have support.

You might be wondering why I am sharing all of this information with you, but I wanted to give some background to the personal experience that we have had and what this bill means to us.

We are Mainers. We understand the bite of winter, and the resilience required to navigate freezing cold temperatures. Our kiddos are bundled in layers for the walk into school when the thermometer dips below freezing. With that said though, our climate is constantly changing. The escalating frequency and intensity of these extreme temperature events are not anomalies; they are the undeniable fingerprints of climate change, a global reality that is now acutely impacting our Maine students. For example: studies have shown that students who learn in hot classrooms are more likely to experience fatigue, headaches, and difficulty concentrating. They are also more likely to miss school and perform poorly on tests.

The science is unequivocal: excessive heat/cold cripples a child's ability to learn. These are not mere discomforts; they are tangible barriers to education. The research presented in journals like "Effects of Classroom Ventilation Rate and Temperature on Students' Test Scores" (Epstein et al., 2012) demonstrates a clear correlation between comfortable classroom temperatures and significantly higher academic performance. "Heat and Learning" (Oster, 2018) chillingly quantifies this loss,

revealing that each degree hotter a school year is, the learning for that year diminishes by a full percent. Furthermore, "Too hot or too cold to study?" (Zhang & Cutler, 2021) highlights the direct impact on engagement, showing that students are less likely to even attend and study when temperatures are extreme. These are not abstract theories; they are concrete findings that underscore the urgent need for action.

My children, Acadia (10) and Wilton (8) have prepared statements that they would like to share with you about their personal experiences this last year. I know that some of my students, their classmates, and friends are watching today in support as well:

Acadia: Hello, my name is Acadia. My school gets very hot, especially upstairs because heat rises. Last year it was almost 100 degrees in my classroom. They had the fans on but I could barely feel them. It was really hard to work when it was really hot inside the classroom. I could hardly think about what I was doing. Imagine being a teacher in 100 degrees teaching at least 20 students that could hardly focus because it was so hot. That was bad and it was not safe. People felt like they were going to throw up, pass out, and were dehydrated. That is bad. Teachers are not allowed to have air conditioners to keep the heat out. I have asthma. The heat can affect my asthma and I could pass out and if other people have asthma they could pass out too. Being a student myself, my class, and my teacher think we need air conditioning. Thank you.

Wilton: Hello, my name is Wilton. There is a lot of heat in our schools so please help our schools. We need to have good temperatures. Last year I came home sweating. I felt too hot to learn. Being hot can make students not want to learn. It's hard to think when it's hot. My brain is slow and I can't focus on reading and math. It makes me feel sticky. I can't run at recess. My classmates are noisy because we are uncomfortable. Teachers feel hot too. Teachers get sweaty and uncomfortable just like us. It's hard to teach when they don't feel good. It's hard for them to help us. If they are hot and tired it's harder for them to help us learn. Please help us. Thank you.

We cannot, in good conscience, relegate our children to environments proven to hinder their intellectual growth and jeopardize their well-being. Offering brief cool-down periods or encouraging hydration, while well-intentioned, are mere band-aids on a gaping wound. Other states have recognized this critical link between learning environment and educational outcomes, enacting policies that mandate appropriate classroom temperatures. Maine must not lag behind. We must establish clear, legally binding minimum/maximum temperatures for learning, a threshold beyond which schools are obligated to dismiss students to safeguard their health and their right to an effective education.

While I understand the complexities associated with implementing this law statewide, we must also consider the immeasurable cost of failing to act: the diminished potential of our students, the increased rates of absenteeism, and the weakening of receiving their basic needs.

Establishing a minimum/maximum temperature for learning and supporting infrastructure improvements are essential steps to ensure a comfortable and safe learning environment for all Maine students.

Thank you for your time and consideration of this important matter.

Shauna Broyer (Oxford, Maine)