



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

2 STATE HOUSE STATION
AUGUSTA, MAINE 04333-0002
(207) 287-1440
TTY: (207) 287-4469

Sheila Lyman

14 Lyman Lane,
Livermore Falls, ME 04254
Residence: (207) 320-0588
Sheila.Lyman@legislature.maine.gov

Senator Rafferty and Representative Murphy and Members of the Education Committee,

I am Representative Sheila Lyman of District 76 that serves the towns of Livermore Falls, Jay, and Livermore; I am here today to express my strong support for LD 919; "An Act to Require Parental Permission for Certain Surveys and Questionnaires Administered to Minors in Schools" which is a bill that protects the privacy of our children in schools. This legislation prohibits public and private schools from administering surveys or questionnaires that require a minor student's full name without obtaining written permission from a parent or guardian.

As a parent and teacher, I understand the importance of gathering feedback from students to improve their educational experiences. However, I firmly believe that our children's privacy should always come first. Requiring the full name of a minor for surveys can lead to data breaches and misuse of sensitive information. By mandating parental consent for such disclosures, this bill ensures that parents are fully aware of what information is being collected from their children and how it will be used.

A second consequence that results from gathering feedback from students are two recent examples shared with me by current teachers. Both expressed concern with content topics and would not have asked their students to complete the forms if they were given the choice. Even though each scenario was quite different. Both initiated confusing content that raised social consideration that some students had not been presented with involving pronoun choices, social relationship structures, and sexual activity. One was given to 6th graders and the other during team time in a middle school setting. These surveys prompted some discomfort, and for other students they brought forward confusion and questions that should be presented to minors for consideration only when and if parents/guardians determine the appropriateness of the content. The educator expressed frustration and even concern for being responsible for delivering social emotional content inappropriate for some individuals. Had parents been given an



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

2 STATE HOUSE STATION
AUGUSTA, MAINE 04333-0002
(207) 287-1440
TTY: (207) 287-4469

Sheila Lyman

14 Lyman Lane,
Livermore Falls, ME 04254
Residence: (207) 320-0588
Sheila.Lyman@legislature.maine.gov

opt-in permission policy, the decision making in regards to minors would have the sole responsibility of the parent/guardian's, as should be practiced.

Some have expressed that an opt-in could be a costly and complicated imposition on our public schools. That is false. There are so many current practices that inform parents. Universal emails, robo-calls, and social media tools. These practices have only been further developed since I taught. We used text messages for reminders to families on school events, fundraising information, scheduled school events, even school related cancellations.

In a world where data is increasingly vulnerable to exploitation and where children may not fully understand the implications of sharing personal information, it is crucial that we empower parents to safeguard their children's privacy. This bill strengthens the partnership between schools and families, making sure that parents have a say in what their children engage within the learning environment.

Just as important, this bill honors parental rights and responsibilities, when it comes to the journey a family embarks on as they embrace and practice beliefs and principles they choose, even as they celebrate and practice established traditions. This is the foundation of social and emotional learning and should be left to "parenting."

The bottom line is that parents/guardians need to have the right to "opt-in" on any questionnaires/surveys that collect information about their child. Our public schools work for the public and serve the children being raised by their parents. Some push back with, "What about the minors that do not have parents that address their minor's needs?" There are laws, resources, and protocols in place to address the concerns and needs of those at risk youth.

Opting-in allows parents to do the parenting and to be the decision makers for content a minor is exposed to with school activities. Collaboration with informed parents that give permission to complete any questionnaire or survey is yet another way to build a partnership between home and school. It can build trust and confidence with our



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

2 STATE HOUSE STATION
AUGUSTA, MAINE 04333-0002

(207) 287-1440
TTY: (207) 287-4469

Sheila Lyman

14 Lyman Lane,
Livermore Falls, ME 04254
Residence: (207) 320-0588
Sheila.Lyman@legislature.maine.gov

school's educational programs and practices. Parents should be the decision makers on all matters regarding their children!

Supporting LD 919 is a step toward creating safer learning environments for our students. I urge you to vote in favor of this important legislation to protect our children's privacy rights.

Thank you for your time and consideration.