



April 23, 2025

Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs

Re: LD 1248 An Act Regarding Physical Escort and Restraint and Seclusion of Students in Schools

Chair Rafferty, Chair Murphy, and Distinguished Members of the Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs

My name is Carrie Woodcock and I am the Executive Director for Maine Parent Federation (MPF) and the parent of two children with different abilities. MPF is Maine's federally funded Parent Training and Information Center and Family-to-Family Health Information Center. We provide training and individual assistance to families of children with different abilities (especially to underserved populations) to increase access to all systems of care and increase positive outcomes.

I am testifying today against LD 1248 An Act Regarding Physical Escort and Restraint and Seclusion of Students in Schools. Removing language such as voluntary and serious bodily injury leaves little protection for our students against an approach which many studies have shown increases behaviors and increases injuries to students and staff alike.

According to MEPRI's report on behavior, completed by a large number of teachers, educational technicians, and administrators from across the entire state, staff are overwhelmingly expressing a need for de-escalation training. Those which had received this training expressed it was not sufficient. This survey made very clear that what we are currently doing in our classrooms is not working, why would we consider increasing these practices?

The recommendation from MEPRI was the creation of a technical assistance center for schools to access behavior support, as currently Maine is the only state that does not provide this support. Curiously enough Chapter 33 clearly states "The department shall, using existing resources, provide technical assistance to covered entities by developing, implementing and providing technical assistance to support evidence-based programs that reduce the likelihood of physical restraint or seclusion, and support students in

reducing behavior that can result in physical restraint or seclusion, such as developmentally appropriate, positive behavior interventions, functional behavioral interventions, mental health supports, restorative justice programs, trauma-informed care and crisis and de-escalation interventions.” Based on MEPRI’s recommendations and what we are hearing from teachers themselves this stipulation in Chapter 33 has not been implemented.

Additionally, Chapter 33 states that the Department has a due process system in place specific for Chapter 33 for individuals who would like to dispute the use of restraint and seclusion. Based on my professional experience this process is difficult to access and is the responsibility of one individual at the Department who has a multitude of other responsibilities.

Therefore, I am asking the Committee to consider an amendment to this bill which would provide the necessary resources to the Department to provide technical assistance to districts and a full dispute resolution process to come into full compliance with Chapter 33.

It is time we provide our staff and students with what they need instead of increasing reactive interventions which will only increase not only the number of behavior incidents in our classrooms but also the intensity.

Respectfully,  
Carrie Woodcock