



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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Senator Rafferty, Representative Murphy, Distinguished Members of the Education and Cultural Affairs Committee:

My name is Will Tuell. I represent House District 10, which consists of roughly two dozen small communities in central and coastal Washington County. I am here today to speak in strong support of LD 1248.

I do so because, as we heard earlier this session, our teachers and school support staff are under siege from violent, out of control students.

When I presented a bill on this issue earlier in the session, I was aware there were widespread problems – problems in small schools like mine, with limited resources and abilities to combat them, but also in larger, more affluent schools with more resources and supports in place. But I was not prepared for nearly four hours of testimony from respected teachers, principals, and lifelong educators crying out for help, expressing burnout and frustration over the fact that the profession they have given the better part of their lives to is in a state of serious decline.

This issue of student discipline is multi-layered. While there are many reasons for it, and no shortage of opinions on how to deal with it, I applaud Rep. Sargent for bringing this common sense legislation forward. It may not be “the solution” but it is part of the solution, just as my LD 165 is part of the solution.

Were this legislation to pass, it might just avoid some of those extreme circumstances we heard about in the hearing on my bill, and just as importantly, it might just help superintendents, principals, and teachers keep kids from escalating their behavior to a point where suspension is necessary.

We have a lot of partisan discord amongst our ranks this session, but this issue should not break down on partisan lines. We should be able to come together, take the good ideas from Democratic and Republican bills, and rein in the growing school discipline problems we have in Maine.

I am willing to do that. I believe Rep. Sargent is as well, and I would encourage you advance both of these very important pieces of legislation, or our schools, and the students they serve, are only going to continue to become less safer, and ultimately, less focused on education.