

Good morning Senator Rafferty, Representative Murphy, and members of the Educational & Cultural Affairs Committee. I am Jasen Richardson, and I am here from Maine Arts Academy to speak in opposition of LD1571.


I have been an educator for 15 years, and almost 8 of those years I have been at Maine Arts Academy. Our school is an extraordinary place with an exceptionally brilliant and compassionate faculty and staff. We have weathered many adversities and have continued to grow in a way that astounds me on a consistent basis. Our students come to our school in hopes of an education outside of the norm. They want to excel in the arts and in academics in a setting that champions both equally, something that does not typically permeate the regular public school system.

If you pass this bill, it will devastate our climate, and, in turn, devastate our students. It will take away a refuge, if you will, from a population of Maine's students that want something that will motivate them to find purpose in their lives. They find purpose at Maine Arts Academy; they break out of their shells and learn what it takes to be compassionate, tolerant, understanding, responsible, and productive members of society; and they are welcomed for who they are as individuals, not as what any one particular part of society wants them to be.

As an educator, I have seen phenomenal teachers during my career that do not hold a certification but that do have unique experience in their fields and/or have an advanced degree. On the flip side of that coin, I have seen teachers that do hold a certification and who have no right being in a classroom. I believe that education is a symbiotic relationship based on a foundation of knowledge, understanding, compassion, and love. Nowhere in my philosophy of education do I believe that education is based on merit alone. If an educator can facilitate pedagogy in an environment that is not only conducive to learning but also embraces the students in a way that brings insightfulness to their lives and helps guide them towards personal excellence, then why hinder that with legislation.

Our teachers put their absolute best foot forward every day to fulfill the promise of an education that will enable our students to be the best human beings they can be. Malcolm X said, "Education is the passport to the future, for tomorrow belongs to those who prepare for it today." We need all the help we can get to ensure we are continuing to provide those proverbial passports for our students. We need to be able to continue to prepare for today, so that we can help our state and our nation tomorrow. I urge all of you to rethink this action. It could have astronomically negative implications on our future. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,


Jasen Richardson, M.A. and M.H.

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