

February 24, 2026

Cara Courchesne Testimony in Support of LD 2192:

An Act to Protect Students by Ensuring Schools Have Complete Information About School Employees and Applicants for Employment

Senator Rafferty, Representative Murphy, and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs:

My name is Cara Courchesne. I am the constituent Senator Rotundo referenced in her testimony. When I walked into my daughter's school in August 2025, I saw a man who sexually harassed me twenty years ago. He looked at me, looked at my daughter, then back at me, and smirked.

When he sexually harassed me in 2005, he was 20 years old. He was 34.

I learned via a simple Google search that in November 2024, he left his position as an assistant principal in southern Maine amidst sexual harassment allegations. In February 2025, Lewiston Public Schools hired him as an ed tech.

A few days before the 2025 school year started, he was promoted to school counselor for grades 4 through 6 at my daughter's school.

My daughter is in fourth grade.

I alerted LPS's Superintendent and he was placed on leave. It was clear that the allegations against him that I found by googling him were news to LPS.

The district where this person was previously employed refused to share information on the record with Lewiston Public Schools. I battled with his previous district for months with my own request for public records.

That district signed a resignation agreement with this person that required two glowing letters of recommendation (and outlined what the letters had to cover) and the investigative files related to the sexual harassment allegations against him be were to be sealed and held-offsite at the law offices of Drummond Woodsum.

Meanwhile in Lewiston, the burden fell to me to recount in detail the harassment I endured two decades ago, as if that were the only evidence that mattered. And because the southern Maine district refused to engage, what happened to me was the only evidence LPS had access to.

And it wasn't enough.

He knew I was the one who reported him. He had access to my daughter's records - including

where we live and my contact information. The school said they wouldn't be able to tell if he accessed my child's information. He had more access to my daughter at school than LPS had access to the allegations against him. My daughter's safety plan couldn't name him and amounted to, "an adult in this building cannot contact this child."

I learned that this person was in charge of the sex education curriculum for grades 5 and 6. When I expressed concern, I was told that I could opt my child out of that curriculum. *A staff member who resigned amidst sexual harassment allegations was the sex ed educator at my daughter's school.*

None of this was found in a background check.

I was also given the option for my child to move to another school, as though my daughter should have to pay for the district's mistake by upending her life. As though the decision to allow him back wasn't dangerous for other students and staff.

Due to labor laws (at least as noted by LPS), my daughter's safety plan could not name him. The plan, which I was told was reviewed by Drummond Woodsum, the same firm that held sealed records concerning sexual harassment allegations against this person, amounted to "an adult in this building cannot contact this child." It felt like a sick joke.

The house of cards that was built around this person to return to school - because RSU 21 refused to talk to Lewiston - would have been a farce if it wasn't so dangerous, terrifying, and real.

It's hard to get people to act differently when our system enables their behavior. That goes for perpetrators, the administrators who quietly move them along, and the attorneys who train school leaders to fear lawsuits more than harm to children and educators.

This bill is not just about my experience. Countless Maine kids, parents, and school staff have experienced their own physical and emotional trauma at the hands of school personnel our current systems cannot weed out. I've been contacted by student and school staff survivors, district union leaders, and school committee members across Maine. I've talked with educators we've lost because they aren't protected, including one victim who told me that she left her job because she couldn't work for a district that cared more about protecting themselves from a lawsuit than her safety or her students' safety.

Some quotes from Maine people I talked with include:

From a parent: *We reported what [a school staff member] did to the Police Department and that wasn't the first time they'd heard of this guy. The detective told us that in addition to him, it was a pattern with our school district.*

From a school staff member: *I reported [a school staff member] and didn't feel protected. They protected him. He was cleared to come back when it was just staff reports. Then parents spoke up with their stories about him. He ended up leaving and going to another school district.*

From a school staff member: *We met about [a school staff member] as union staff. He wasn't just harassing one person, he was unprofessional across the board. We talked about what happens if he leaves here? He's going to go somewhere else. This is going to happen again. We care about the students in our charge. We care about our fellow teachers because we're a community. This was a meeting of nearly 60 people. To have that many people all feel that way after having this person in our building for a year and a half...you know something isn't right. And he went on to another district anyway.*

From a parent and educator: *[A school staff member] was in communication with multiple female students on his personal phone. He would text them regularly in the mornings, asking them when they would be coming to school. He also asked students for pictures of other students.*

From the spouse of a school staff member: *When you have someone who has been reported over and over again for the same thing - that should be something schools know about before they hire someone. My wife didn't say anything about how [a school staff member] treated her for months. Then she realized what he was doing to students and she reported his behavior.*

From a school staff member: *There were several initiatives that started and then ended because no one wanted to work with [a school staff member] because of his lack of professionalism. There were many people who left the school because of him. I was saddened to see he was hired by another district because I didn't want more people to have the same experiences I did.*

From a grandparent: *My granddaughter will be going to Kindergarten as part of the Deaf community. Thank you for what you are doing.*

From a school board member: *I just read your post online and it was very powerful. I fully support the passing of it and hopefully it does. I'm reaching out to see if you can direct me on what I could google or research [where] I would come across the name of the employee. I am on the school board in my district and we are close to Lewiston and I would like to keep an eye out so if the name comes across my paperwork, I can be aware.*

When school committee members across the state are reaching out to me (a random person on the internet) to help screen future candidates for employment in our schools, that's a system that isn't working. It's not one we should defend, and it's not a status quo that can continue.

When the people charged with oversight have to crowdsource basic information, that's not collaboration. It's realizing the bridge is held together by duct tape and bungee cords, and hoping no one looks down.

I am aware of the pressures you are likely facing from powerful lobbying groups pleading with you to vote this bill down. I want you to ask yourself: How will you feel the next time you see or hear about a school employee harming someone if you let this go because this bill may be hard - and there are only two months left in session?

What will I tell my daughter when she is old enough to know this story? What will you tell the children in your life? Will we say that the adults in charge did the right thing or will we say that they caved to pressure from a system that protects itself instead of children and educators?

I hope we can all look children in the eye and say that when it mattered, the adults in charge chose courage over false comfort, accountability over self-protection, and did what was right and necessary to keep them and their teachers safe.

Thank you.