



# Maine Children's Alliance

Advocating for the well-being of all Maine families.

Testimony of Rita Furlow  
Maine Children's Alliance

Before the Joint Standing Committee on Education & Cultural Affairs  
LD 2192

An Act to Protect Students by Ensuring Schools Have Complete  
Information About School Employees and Applicants for Employment  
February 24, 2026

Good afternoon, Senator Rafferty and Representative Murphy, and esteemed members of the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs, my name is Rita Furlow. I am testifying on behalf of the Maine Children's Alliance, a statewide organization dedicated exclusively to protecting and promoting the well-being of Maine children. When gaps in public systems create preventable risks for children, it is our responsibility to speak. For that reason, we are here in strong support of LD 2192, *An Act to Protect Students by Ensuring Schools Have Complete Information About School Employees and Applicants for Employment*.

Preparing Maine for a prosperous future demands ensuring that the places where children spend their days are safe, stable, and trustworthy. When families send their children to school, they entrust the adults in charge with their protection. Trust in public education necessitates preventing foreseeable harm rather than tolerating preventable risks. The harm at issue here is not trivial.

Decades of research have revealed that exposure to sexual misconduct or abuse can lead to toxic stress levels that disrupt brain development. When a child's stress system is overwhelmed without protection, it negatively impacts learning, behavior, and long-term health. The key is that with protection, such as supportive relationships with trusted adults, these stress responses can be reduced and not become detrimental to health.

Schools are designed to provide these protective environments, serving as buffers against stress rather than amplifying it. However, when abusers are permitted to move from one school to another due to inadequate information sharing, the consequences extend beyond legal and reputational repercussions. They can have long-term developmental implications and harm for students.

Federal law mandates that states prohibit schools from aiding or abetting employees who have engaged in sexual misconduct. Nevertheless, local policies vary across the country and within Maine, posing serious risks to Maine students' safety.

Without clear screening requirements and information-sharing protocols, individuals who harm children can leave one district and simply reappear in another. This is not merely a potential threat; it is a reality that demands immediate attention.

This bill aims to prevent such occurrences from happening again. While we often focus on school safety measures like cameras and building access, safety also hinges on safe hiring practices and effective information systems. LD 2192 establishes these structural prevention measures, serving as guardrails that will prevent problems before they escalate into tragedies.

LD 2192 requires applicants to disclose past investigations and employment history. Schools verify the information, former employers share relevant findings, and no contract or agreement can suppress safety-related information.

LD 2192 emphasizes a simple principle: when credible information indicates a child's potential risk, it cannot be concealed, ignored, or dismissed. No agreement, contract, or administrative shortcut should ever be prioritized over a child's safety.

Protecting children should always come before protecting institutions. Prevention should be the primary focus, not damage control. As Maine's statewide child advocacy organization, our responsibility is to speak up when systems fail to safeguard children. We urge you to recognize our obligation to protect Maine children by supporting LD 2192.

Thank you for your consideration.