

Michele LaForge
South Portland High School

April 1, 2021

Dear Committee,

Many thanks for your work on behalf of the Maine education community. We are writing today to submit testimony against LD 552 which would drastically undermine the effective management of special services in our schools. Without qualification, we support the testimony of our district colleagues and professionals in the field of special education and some are linked & included below.

In addition to their detailed testimony, we want to add something that is essential to consider, always but more today given our political climate and knowledge of the inequities in the world.

This bill is clearly for the children who have parents who come to meetings, who have parents. The bill does not include the language “parents or guardians” which has become standard in all of our schools. Our unaccompanied minors, our students who have only limited advocacy, or who are wards of the state rarely have anyone at an IEP meeting for them. This bill--if it does what it intends--would only add resources for families who already have them. The power to object to an IEP team decision has always been and will continue to be in the parent or guardian’s hands. It’s already there. This bill has the potential to hurt the children with the fewest resources due to generational poverty and others causes of inequity.

Sincerely,

Michele LaForge, Principal, South Portland High School
Rebecca Stern, Principal, Memorial Middle School
Bethany Connolly, Principal, Skillin Elementary School
Carrie Stilphen, Principal, Mahoney Middle School
Elizabeth Fowler, Principal, Dyer Elementary School
Mitch Ouellet, Assistant Principal, Mahoney Middle School
Alexis Jones, Principal, Brown Elementary School

<https://legislature.maine.gov/testimony/resources/EDU20210322Croft132609162602841606.pdf>

<https://legislature.maine.gov/testimony/resources/EDU20210322Rioux132610901259187581.pdf>

<https://legislature.maine.gov/testimony/resources/EDU20210322Connors132610180162949880.pdf>