

TESTIMONY IN OPPOSITION TO

L.D. 880

AN ACT TO PROTECT SCHOOL EMPLOYEES FROM WORKPLACE BULLYING

Senator Rafferty, Representative Brennan and members of the Education and Cultural Affairs Committee. I am Steven Bailey, executive director of Maine School Management Association, testifying on behalf of the legislative committees of the Maine School Boards Association and Maine School Superintendents Association in opposition to L.D. 880.

The adults in the school building are there to keep students safe and provide them with an education that will prepare them for their next steps in life. It is our mission as teachers and school leaders to take all children and do our best to bring them to full potential.

It is often said that just one adult in a school – be they a caring teacher, a coach, the librarian, the janitor or an administrator, can make a difference in a child's life. We believe that happens every day in Maine schools and is one of the reasons we are so eager to get back to full-time, in-person education, when it is safe.

The problem is L.D. 880 turns our mission as public schools upside down. It says the adult school employees are the ones that need protection.

In situations where an employee has been harmed, we understand the desire to turn the tables and put the adult needs first, but that is not the answer.

It is a burdensome mandate to place on schools. It will require investigation of any complaint by an employee who feels they have been treated unfairly by a fellow employee, a supervisor, a student, a parent, or any other person.

It also does not take into count that adults have protections from harassment in the workplace based on race, color, sex, sexual orientation, physical or mental disability, religion, age, ancestry or national origin in the Human Rights Act in Title 5. They also have protections from unfair treatment under their collective bargaining contracts.

The children in the building have us – the adults – to make sure they are as safe from mistreatment and bullying as we can make them. They are the vulnerable ones in our care who need to be protected.