

To the Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs

My name is Zubeyda Shute and I am from Westbrook. I am just a few weeks shy of graduating High School. To begin, I want to thank Victoria Morales for creating the bill LD 474, which I support and request of you to vote Ought to Pass.

Speaking as someone from is about to finish High School, I can say I had plenty of good and bad experiences. But some of the negative ones, LD 474 hits on the head. As a young Black Woman, and in the past as a girl, I was perceived differently than my peers. Maybe some do not know, but the correlation between race/gender and the quickness of teachers or staff to suspend or give a student detention can occur quite often as it did in my childhood.

The adultification of POC children is not a new concept. Studies from the Law of Georgetown bring these issues to light (but focuses more on Black girls). But the reason I bring this up in the first place is that harsher punishments like out-of-school suspension and detentions affect POC children the hardest, evident by any research on the school-to-prison pipeline. And we as a community currently have the ability to solve a part of that issue with this bill. I remember growing up being labeled as rude, sassy, or having attitude problems from a teacher's perceived bias when my peers could be ten times louder. .Not every adult properly takes the time to analyze their biases, but children can internalize them and it can affect them for years.

LD 474 does not even focus on Middle or High Schoolers. It is about very young children. Let's not villanize them. Children are not inherently violent or dangerous. And coming from someone with a huge family and four little brothers, it is much more productive to have a chat with them and fixing the core issue rather than just making them sit in their rooms all day. And plenty of times, my older siblings and I can fix their disputes faster than one of our parents would. Kids are just so simple to deal with. Instead of stunting their growth, we should be communicating with them and giving them the social and emotional skills they need rather than tossing them out of a classroom. Especially at such a young age, because honestly, children do not do much harm. Their actions are from their surroundings. They are like sponges, and if you teach or tell them the right thing instead of dismissing the problem that will show up later, it would be better for the child and adult.

Some of my friends and peers from Maine Connections Academy heard of this bill and wanted to say their support despite not being able to make it. I hope you were able to understand my point of view. Please vote to pass LD 474 for the sake of improving our schools.

Thank You,
Zubeyda Shute