



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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Senator Rafferty, Representative Brennan and honorable members of the Education Committee - My name is John Andrews and I represent the towns of Buckfield, Hebron and Paris in western Maine that make up District 73. I am here today to support LD 1640, 'An Act to Enact the Campus Free Expression Act' to codify into state law protections of our natural right to free speech for all current and future students in Maine on public college and university campuses.

Natural rights are those most basic rights which are innate to humankind and do not need to depend upon a government to exist. Man created government to secure and protect these rights. They are the foundation of our civilization, our Republic and our Democracy. Thomas Paine explained in The Rights of Man that,

"Man did not enter into society to become worse than he was before, nor to have fewer rights than he had before, but to have those rights better secured."

The cornerstone for securing natural rights into law was first laid in 1215 A.D with signing of the Magna Carta that put forward the revolutionary idea that government only exists at the consent of the governed and that governments are bound by law and cannot infringe upon the rights of man without due process. Our own Constitution and First Amendment is an evolution in securing and protecting our natural rights by restricting our own government from certain actions against the citizenry. The First Amendment states:

"Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances."

Governmental abridgement of the freedom of speech and of the right of the people to peaceably assemble on public educational spaces is why we find ourselves here today. The Campus Free Expression Act seeks to put into state law protections for our natural right of free speech and freedom of assembly on public educational spaces.

This bill is important because censorship often leads to limited exposure to ideas that you disagree with or may find offensive. This only exposes impressionable minds to one side of a coin. All people, but in particular young people, need to be exposed to all viewpoints and ideas - even the truly rotten and objectionable ones. This is the only way that the brain can learn to delineate between which ideas are worth pursuing and which ideas are not worthwhile and to learn which ideas are worthy to build upon and explore further.

In the free market of ideas if you express hatred and bigotry people will see you for the fool that you are. That is the beauty of true free speech, it exposes truth. You will never know evil if you are never exposed to it. Our students need to be exposed to the good, the bad and the ugly of life and that is why this Act is so important.

Administrations and policies change, but our natural rights never do. That is why the Campus Free Expression Act is so important and must be passed. The Education Committee has an opportunity to put sound and just policy into law so that it cannot change upon a whim or the political winds. You have the opportunity to pass the Campus Free Expression Act to protect current and future generations of Maine's public higher education students.

Please to vote Ought to Pass and enshrine into law these protections of our most basic natural rights. Thank you for your time, commitment to our students and to public service.

Respectfully,

John Andrews
State Representative
District 73