

Testimony  
Submitted to the Committee of Education and Cultural Affairs  
May 10, 2021  
Re: LD 1640  
An Act to Enact the Campus Free Speech and Free Press Act

Dear Members of the Education and Cultural Affairs Committee:

I am writing in support of LD 1640 and ask that the committee vote in favor of this bill.

We go to college to learn and seek knowledge, and to acquire the skills necessary to think critically, and to graduate as better, informed human beings. We enter campus grounds—that have historically anchored “the great centers of debate, discussion, and innovation.” Today, however, there is a growing movement to ban free speech and the liberties we hold dear. University campuses are rampant with what is referred to as “political correctness” and it is infringing upon our free speech.

Since 2013, research shows that radical activists (students) started to silence views different from their own. They insisted new speech codes be established, and refused to invite certain speakers to campus. Demands were made for ‘trigger warnings’—a warning to silence anything and anybody they deemed to be a “offensive.” Controversial speech was no longer welcome. And the students determined the topics to be allowed on campus. This was the beginning of the call for “safe spaces.”

Originally, it was the administration and teachers who silenced speech in universities in an attempt to make everyone feel comfortable. For instance, students of color “profoundly misinterpreted...seeing racial animus where none existed.” And teachers and administrators failed to address issues truthfully out of fear of protests. This is a sad commentary on our educational system and universities.

Today, we are witnessing the suppression of speech at our Maine universities.

The Foundation for Individual Rights in Education (FIRE), stated that several universities in Maine are in violation of free speech. FIRE “grades

policies employed by universities,” and uses a color code by which to rate university policies on free speech. Green indicates the First Amendment is “supported.” Yellow “indicates the university...has policies that have the potential to restrict free speech.” And Red shows a university is blatantly restricting freedom of speech.

The “University of Maine,” the “University of Maine at Fort Kent,” the “University of Maine at Presque Isle,” the “University of Southern Maine,” and two additional universities in Maine have all received a “yellow” grade. Not one university received a Green ranking.

Clearly there is a need for the proposed legislation. If we fail to act we run the risk of losing free speech and our freedom forever.

I have attached the Congressional Research Service on “Free Speech on College Campuses: Considerations for Congress” for your review.

I respectfully urge you to vote “out to pass” on LD 1640.

Thank you,  
Annie Christy

References:

Diversity Delusion, Heather MacDonald, 2018

Maine Wire, William Rolfe, June 4, 2019

No Safe Spaces, Joseph and Prager, 2019

<https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/LSB/LSB10438>