

Kate Brenner-Simpson
Ellsworth
LD 51

Senator Rafferty, Representative Brennan, and distinguished members of the Education and Cultural Affairs Committee, I am asking you today to vote 'ought to pass' on LD 51.

During my time as a Maine resident I spent two and a half years in the public school system attending a local state university and although my time was short compared to others who grew up in the public schools, both LD 798 and LD 51 still effect me greatly. I have lost my access to the public education I was counting so heavily on to finish my degree, I, along with my younger brother, have had to make the difficult decision to leave our family behind in Maine and move out to other states that will still grant us our philosophical and religious exemptions, my younger sister has lost her access to public school and participation in all extracurricular activities she enjoys so much, and my mother has been unable to continue her journey of entering the workforce she has been tirelessly preparing for for years.

The life we all knew together has now been split up unexpectedly, we are no longer able to appreciate the educational, financial, and medical experiences we've always known and relied on, and most importantly a giant rift has opened up between families like ours asking for philosophical and religious exemptions and those who don't need to. The deep pain and anguish I felt having to leave my family has taken a large toll on my mental and physical health which in turn has effected my work performance and every day life in a new state. I love Maine and want to return someday but my decision to leave was due to the fact that I could not live the same life freely anymore and under current circumstances I would not be able to raise my own kids there in the future either.

The passing of LD 51 will allow a myriad of families like my own to stay together, stay in Maine, and continue contributing to the economy and livelihood of the state we all care so much about. Without LD 51 many parents will be forced to quit their jobs or work from home to homeschool their kids who can't attend public schools, many employers will be short staffed, many students in higher education will not attend Maine schools and apply elsewhere taking their much needed skills and talents with them, and a large proportion of Mainers will be forced to leave much like myself in search of a more equal state to live.

I am asking you today to vote 'ought to pass' on LD 51, it is very important for the success of the state of Maine and all its residents that the public education system stays open and equal for all individuals deserving of it for generations yet to come, thank you for your consideration,

Kate Brenner-Simpson

Former Ellsworth Maine resident, now relocated to Naples, Florida.