



## Maine Education Association

Grace Leavitt **President** | Jesse Hargrove **Vice President** | Beth French **Treasurer**  
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**Testimony  
In Support of  
LD 1263 An Act to Require School Identification Cards to Include the  
Telephone Number of a Suicide Prevention Hotline  
Grace Leavitt, President, Maine Education Association  
Before the Joint Standing Committee on Education & Cultural Affairs  
April 5, 2023**

Senator Rafferty, Representative Brennan, and members of the Education and Cultural Affairs Committee,

My name is Grace Leavitt. My pronouns are she, her, hers. I am serving as President of the Maine Education Association while on leave from teaching Spanish in MSAD 51. I have over 43 years of classroom teaching experience with 20 years as a National Board Certified teacher. The MEA represents nearly 24,000 educators in our Maine system of public education in pre-K-12 schools as well as in our institutions of higher education, both the University of Maine System and the Maine Community College System, along with students in teacher preparation programs as well as many retired educators.

I am here to testify on behalf of MEA in support of LD 1263, An Act to Require School Identification Cards to Include the Telephone Number of a Suicide Prevention Hotline.

While we are in support of this proposal, it is incredibly sad that we find ourselves in a situation where there is such a proposal being made. Yet we recognize that, given the results of the most recent Maine Integrated Youth Health Survey (MIYHS)<sup>1</sup> which showed that nearly one-fifth of high school age students and one-sixth of middle school age students seriously considered attempting suicide, we must do what we can to prevent a possible tragedy.

Having the phone number for a suicide prevention hotline readily accessible on a student's id card can only help. However, not all schools provide identification cards for students. And of course, cards can be lost. We would hope that all schools, especially those that are not able to provide id cards, consider additional ways to make such phone numbers known to students and have them accessible through whatever means they can, and that the schools that do not provide cards explore a way to provide them also.

Most of all, we urge the Committee to view favorably the other legislation that has been proposed to help address the mental health needs of our students, such as LD 829, An Act to Improve Behavioral Health Support for Students in Public Schools.

Thank you for doing all you can to support our students and to keep them safe.

<sup>1</sup><https://www.wmtw.com/article/survey-shows-increase-in-maine-students-feeling-hopeless/41757983>