

Jenny Rutherford
Gorham, ME
LD 537

Testimony of Jenny Rutherford
Parent of Children in the Gorham School System
March 5, 2025

Dear Honorable Members of the Committee,

My name is Jenny Rutherford, and I am a parent of children in the Gorham school system. I am here today to testify about the dangerous and harmful impact that doxing of students has on their safety and privacy, particularly for members of our LGBTQ+ community. This is an issue that deeply concerns me, as I have personally witnessed the harmful consequences of this practice on my own family and others within our community.

Recently, my youngest daughter, who is part of her school's civil rights team, had her photo shared publicly and maliciously. The photo, which was meant to show her involvement in promoting diversity and inclusion, was used to attack her teacher and her teacher's daughter, who is a minor and openly gay. The post also included personal information including phone number and address and it was encouraged that they be contacted to show people's discontent. This unjust attack on a teacher and a student, simply because of their identities, is a painful reminder of the dangers that our children face when their personal information is shared without consent. The fact that these students and their families were targeted in this way is not only a violation of their privacy, but it also endangers their safety and well-being.

I strongly oppose the doxing of students and feel it is our responsibility as adults to protect our children from such harmful acts. The harm caused by doxing is not just emotional but also physical, as it exposes children to threats and harassment. As a parent, it is heart-wrenching to see the fear and distress that this causes, particularly for LGBTQ+ students who are already vulnerable to discrimination and hate. It is imperative that we create a safe environment for all students, where their identities are respected, and their privacy is protected.

I wanted to share this story because I believe that no student should be subjected to such public humiliation or danger. We must take a stand and work together to protect our children from this injustice. What would have helped prevent this situation is stricter policies on student privacy and clear consequences for those who engage in doxing. I also urge that schools implement educational programs that address the importance of respecting privacy, combating hate, and fostering inclusivity.

To address this issue, I believe we should enact stronger laws and regulations that prevent the unauthorized sharing of student images or personal information. Schools should also implement clear policies and guidelines that prevent the release of students' personal data and photos without consent. Additionally, there should be dedicated resources for supporting students who are targeted in such attacks, including counseling and legal support.

Thank you for taking the time to listen to my testimony. Your consideration of these matters and the solutions I have proposed is very much appreciated. I hope that, together, we can create a safer and more supportive environment for all students in Maine.

Sincerely,
Jenny Rutherford
Concerned Parent in the Gorham School System