

Rachel Allen

Naples

LD 1978

LD 1978 MTCA CSA Bill

TESTIMONY OF : Rachel Allen

IN SUPPORT OF

LD 1978, An Act Regarding Government Liability Related to Sexual Acts Toward Minors

May 19, 2025

Judiciary Committee

Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn, and Honorable Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary, my name is Rachel Allen. I live in Naples. I am here today to testify on behalf of my son Miles Allen who lost his long battle with depression and anxiety at age 35 in 2023. Miles died by suicide. When he was 15 years old, Miles was sexually abused over at least a two year period by a high school teacher at Gray New Gloucester High School, SAD 15.

As a parent of a victim of childhood sexual abuse, I am here today to explain what LD 1978 means to me.

This legislation removes an arbitrary blockade that has prevented me from getting justice. Because my son was sexually abused by a public school teacher, the governmental immunities of the Maine Tort Claims Act prevent me from having the opportunity to expose a pedophile who was given the opportunity to resign from SAD 15. The school district did not even comply with mandatory reporting.

When my son was 15 years old he came out as gay. He had suffered the traumatic loss of his best friend who died in a snow mobile accident as well as the unexpected loss of his beloved dog. He was vulnerable.

Prior to this time, Miles was social, involved in track and had done well representing his team in State tournaments. By the end of his sophomore year he had stopped participating in track and had started leaving school during the day. This was totally out of character. Concerned, I was in close contact with school and met with the Assistant Principal and my son on a weekly basis, had neuropsychiatric testing done, developed an IEP and had Miles in counseling. He was diagnosed with depression and anxiety and was started on antidepressant medication which he did not tolerate. His grades began to decline so by the end of the first quarter of his junior year, I began searching for more support and a safe environment and ultimately placed him at the DeckHouse School in Edgecomb where he received emotional support and an individualized educational plan. As a single parent, with Miles' sister attending Emory University, the \$15,000 a trimester was a stretch financially but fortunately I was able to work it out. I had planned on Miles staying at Deckhouse for his senior year, but he really wanted to return to Gray New Gloucester to "graduate with his class." He returned to school but by the end of the first half of his senior year he told me that he was afraid that he might not graduate and chose to move in with his father and complete his last semester at Edward Little in Auburn. He transferred, did well academically and received his diploma.

He chose not to attend graduation since he did not feel part of that school community. I found that sad.

After High School,

Miles decided to go into Americorps. He came home after a few months and I planned to pick him up at the airport but he said a friend was picking him up. Coincidentally, friends / parents of Miles' former classmates ran into Miles and saw that a teacher from Gray New Gloucester picked him up. When I learned this I asked Miles why this teacher picked him up and questioned whether Miles had ever gone to this teachers home or spent time with him in High School. Miles stated that he had been to this teacher's apartment a couple times and met his roommate. I tried to pursue this further but my son stopped the discussion.

Years later, I learned that when Miles was 15, he fell prey to someone who used his influence as a public school teacher to abuse my son. After Miles' suicide, I learned that, less than two years after Miles graduated, the Principal at Gray New Gloucester High School received a call from someone reporting that this same teacher had inappropriate photos of students on his school laptop. The Principal rang the fire alarm and seized the teachers computer. I have no doubt in my mind that photos of my son were among boys photos on that laptop. There was a meeting with the Principal, Superintendent and IT at which the teacher was confronted with content on his computer. There were inappropriate photos of male students. The teacher was given the opportunity to resign, moved to Florida where he taught at a community college, earned his doctorate, became editor of a men's magazine and resides in Tampa.

Once I learned this information, I reported what I had learned to the State sexual assault program and was referred by them to Berman and Simmons and learned about the limitations imposed by Maine's Tort Act.

I then contacted the Maine Sheriff's Department, worked with a Detective Monsees, met with the current Superintendent of SAD 15 who was supportive and cooperative. He informed me that he was able to locate information re: the teacher in question etc., could not share his findings with me but could with law enforcement, I provided that information to the Maine Sheriff Detective who, subsequently, informed me that the District Attorney declined to issue a subpoena to obtain records from the school district since my son, Miles, was dead and would not be able to testify. I contacted the District Attorney's Office who advised that they had no report from the Sheriff and I have not gotten any further.

As you may well know, when you have a family member who is mentally ill, finding and keeping a loved one in the care of virtually nonexistent resources is difficult and actually bankrupts many families. Unfortunately my son's mental illness became much worse after he lost a job that he had for more than 7 years and loved working with people with disabilities. This occurred during Covid. At one point he became acutely psychotic from sleep deprivation. After five days in the emergency room waiting for a bed in a psychiatric facility, and an 11 day mandated inpatient admission, the only services provided by Maine Health were via ZOOM and in four months Miles had FIVE different counselors. Therapists kept resigning due to overload and lack of resources.

You can not build therapeutic relationships over and over and certainly can not disclose information re: sexual abuse over and over. According to hospital discharge plans, Miles was supposed to have trauma therapy and family therapy and was referred to Maine Behavioral Health. At outpatient Maine Behavioral Health we were told that those therapies were unavailable.

Miles stayed with me for four months after his hospitalization. Then he moved into the home of a friend, withdrew, found a website called Sanctioned Suicide which had been exposed by the New York Times in an article that described the site as "the place those in despair go to die,"

From Miles phone, I learned that he had spent at least three months on that website. Based on one of a menu of protocols on that website, Miles met and planned a double suicide and died with another depressed person at the Double Tree Hotel in South Portland in January of 2023..

He left a beautiful letter thanking family and friends for all the love, expressed love for us and also stated that he did not feel worthy of all the good people in his life.

My son never hurt anyone besides himself and was a joy to all who knew him.

That is what Childhood Sexual Abuse does. It robs people of the ability to self actualize by stunting emotional development. The trauma is a precursor to mental illness. It robs much more than one's childhood and adolescence.

Our public institutions should not be safe havens for predators.

I care about exposing and removing these perpetrators from our public institutions.

You have the opportunity and responsibility to effect meaningful change by supporting this vital legislation.

LD 1978 restores dignity to survivors who make courageous decisions to come forward and make their communities safer. LD 1978 is as much about serving the safety of general public as it is individual survivors.

I found a simple entry in a notebook Miles had used during his last days in therapy.

It said, “ I feel stupid for letting childhood trauma bother me now”

That is very telling.

As a result of my son’s injuries, I watched a very independent young man become a shell of himself . I will live everyday of my life trying to figure out what else I might of done to prevent Miles’ death by suicide.

Miles spent his life looking for the good in people and situations but what happened to him in his adolescence, in the words of my doctor, “ate him alive. “

The world was a better place with his integrity and generous spirit in it.

This is not about money. No amount could restore what was taken from Miles.

Nothing will bring him back to friends and family.

And nothing will take away the guilt I feel for not protecting my child nor my adult child who, over a period of months, privately and quietly sunk into suicidal ideation and planned his death.

Suicide is not uncommon in victims of childhood sexual abuse.

This is about justice. I and many people like me want the opportunity to be heard, to present a case to a jury, and to heal through the process of proving that what happened to us or our loved ones really happened. That matters.

You have the power to change my life and the lives of others like me. You have the power to vote to pass on this legislation and restore to my son’s memory that which he never consented to give up...his dignity.

As a constituent, fellow Mainer, neighbor, mother and human being, I am asking you to use the privileges of your office for change.

Again I would like to say, our public institutions can not be safe havens for pedophiles.

Thank you very much. I urge you to vote LD 1978 Ought To Pass. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Rachel Allen