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Belfast
LD 2106

Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn, and other members of the Judiciary committee, my name is Christi Goosman. I am a teacher in Searsport. I am in support of LD 2106.

We know education opens opportunities for young people to make a living and to make a real life for themselves and their families. Many of us have experienced this ourselves. If a kid comes to my school, and is willing to learn and build their skills, they can go far beyond where they began. I have seen this happen with so many current and former students. Part of the reason it happens is that we strive to make our school a safe place for young people to be. Schools have been protected spaces for as long as I have taught...until now. Schools need to continue to be safe spaces, for we have long known that students who don't feel safe, who don't have their basic needs met won't be focused on learning.

My high school students already face a host of traumas that might cause a lesser person to just give up: poverty, food insecurity, home heating issues, domestic instability or disruption, substance use/abuse by a family member or themselves. My colleagues and I have been dealing with student chronic attendance issues prior to the COVID that were heightened by that pandemic. Kids are traumatized as well by a steady diet of social media on their screens, the existential crisis of how to save the planet, and the daily anxiety of what fresh new hell awaits in the daily political news both here and abroad. Yes, they pay attention to that.

Research AND experience shows us that any disruption in school affects more than just a single student. It disrupts the whole class of students, and might also linger through the day and beyond. School professionals ALREADY have more on our plates than there are hours in the day to facilitate learning, manage behaviors, deal with crises, make thousands of decisions, and do it all in a way that makes sure our students feel supported. Neither students nor staff need another burden placed upon them. A child is NOT a dangerous illegal. The vast majority of immigrants (legal or not) keep their heads down, working hard to support their families, paying taxes, trying to make a better life for their families, just like we all do, just like our students want to do in their future.

I often wish we could sue the federal government for the daily trauma and anxiety imposed upon us, but this bill might be one step in the right direction in keeping our students physically and emotionally safe. I urge the committee to vote "ought to pass", and thank you for your tireless work as our citizen legislature.