



# HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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*Testimony of Rep. Michele Meyer supporting*

## **LD 1671, Resolve, To Implement Security Screenings in the State House and Capitol Area Offices**

*Before the Joint Standing Committee on State and Local Government*

Senator Baldacci, Representative Matlack and esteemed members of the State and Local Government Committee, I am Rep. Michele Meyer proudly serving Southern Maine's House District 2: Eliot and parts of South Berwick and Kittery. I am pleased to present testimony in support of **LD 1671, Resolve, To Implement Security Screenings in the State House and Capitol Area Offices.**

In the spring of 2019, a man I knew only through his employment at a local store I patronize followed me into a parking lot near my home, parked his truck behind my vehicle, and positioned himself in such a way at my driver side door that I could not exit if I tried.

Although not my constituent, he had clearly done some research on bills I had co-sponsored and votes I'd taken as a member of the Maine House of Representatives. He asked me how I would be voting on several upcoming pieces of legislation. He was mildly agitated and the situation was unsettling and intimidating. I listened, making no comment, and calmly asked he move his truck so that I might back out and get on my way, which he did.

About two weeks later, he called my name from across the 4<sup>th</sup> floor rotunda at our State House, where he was preparing to testify on several bills. I did not engage with him. I returned to my own committee room in the Cross Building, contemplating the fact this man was again in my orbit.

In February of this year, when a photo of this same man, Kyle Fitzsimmons, bloodied and wild eyed as he joined the violent mob at the U.S. Capitol appeared on front pages following his arrest, it was jarring. It frightens me that I had come face to face with him in the manner I did two years ago.

It is concerning as well to know that the photo triggered the recall of a number of other legislators, who had experienced an angry Mr. Fitzsimmons testifying in front of the Education and Cultural Affairs Committee in 2018, captured on video and memorable for Kyle's angry, racist rant.

It is not difficult to connect the dots from his presence at the Augusta Capitol complex in '18 and '19 to a parking lot in Kittery, Maine, and to the violent insurrection in Washington, D.C., on January 6: Hate and intolerance leave a trail. Alarming, this trail has led of late to seats of government nationwide, with legislators in the sites of those radicalized and unhinged. Could it lead to ours? Of course it can.

I have been deeply concerned since the day I took my seat behind the horseshoe in the Health and Human Services Committee room in the Cross Building that the absence of any security left me, my colleagues, staff, and the thousands of Mainers who visit and participate in state government vulnerable and unsafe. Multiple entry points and no metal detectors or screening are an invitation for violence should someone have such an intent. An active shooter would find legislators at work in committee rooms with little or no opportunity or means of exit. It would be akin to shooting fish in a barrel.

I have raised my concerns with the Capitol Police several times. My comments about a lack of screening in the Cross Building were met with a literal shoulder shrug. Dismissed. A metal detector stood unused in a corner near my committee room. I rarely saw the police "patrolling" the halls and, when I did, wondered how these individuals would fare should an armed individual or several simply stroll through one of the many ways in, intent on wreaking havoc.

I am urging you to take my observations seriously and to address the safety of all those serving in and working at the Capitol complex, particularly at the Cross Building. *We must find a way to balance the ability of the public to fully participate in the process of state government with the safety of those presenting for work in the People's House on their behalf.*

I urge the committee to support this resolve and vote ought to pass.