



Maine LD 2106: An Act to Prohibit the Disclosure of Nonpublic Records without Proper Judicial Review

Michael A. Haedicke, University of Maine

Dear Sen Carney, Rep. Kuhn and Honorable Members of the Judiciary Committee:

I regret that I cannot attend the hearing for LD 2106 in person. I appreciate the opportunity to offer written testimony in support of the bill. I offer this testimony on the basis of my professional experiences and community engagement. I do not speak on behalf of the University of Maine System, my employer, or the University of Maine, my workplace.

I am an associate professor of sociology at the University of Maine, where I have worked since 2020. In addition, I am the father of a first-grade student who attends Abraham Lincoln Elementary in Bangor. As both a professional and a parent, I urge you to vote “ought to pass” on LD 2106 for several reasons.

First, this bill helps educators, childcare workers, and others by clarifying their duties and responsibilities in relation to immigration enforcement actions. When speaking with my peers in other communities that have been targeted for immigration enforcement, I have learned that many are experiencing deep uncertainty and anxiety about the possibility that they will be asked by immigration enforcement officers to provide access to classrooms, offices, and study spaces. I share this anxiety. Many of us feel that such requests are not appropriate, but we are concerned about whether we have the authority to deny access and whether we would face legal jeopardy for doing so.

This bill would resolve such anxieties here in Maine. It would remove the burden of in-the-moment decision making from individual educators and others, who would otherwise be forced to determine a course of action in a confusing and stressful situation. It would clearly establish a legal foundation for the denial of requests for access and bring uniformity to educators’ responses to such requests. This frees educators, such as myself, to focus on the work of teaching.

Second, this bill protects and enhances the learning environment in educational settings. In my time at the University of Maine, and in the other educational institutions where I have taught, I have greatly valued the contributions of the immigrant and refugee students in my classrooms. These students speak from perspectives and experiences that are often unfamiliar to US-born college students – such as the experience of growing up in a family that migrated to follow agricultural work, or the experience of fleeing conflict and persecution, or the experience of switching between different languages in the home and in the school. Encountering these perspectives and experiences in a supportive learning environment enhances the knowledge and empathy of US-born students and helps to prepare them for responsible citizenship and successful careers in our diverse society.

These educational benefits can only be realized when all students, including those from immigrant and refugee families, feel safe and free to speak about their experiences. It is painful to acknowledge, but the current surge in aggressive immigration enforcement is likely to have a chilling effect on such classroom conversations. Students will be concerned not only for their own safety, but for the safety of their families and communities, and will be less likely to share information that might cause them to be targeted. By assuring students that nonpublic areas of schools and universities are not accessible to immigration enforcement, LD 2106 will help to counteract this harmful development. The bill affirms that classrooms are spaces for the free exchange of ideas and for collective learning, which are so essential for the development of students and for the long-term welfare of our state and our society.

Third, this bill protects students, including both US-born students and students from immigrant and refugee families. As we have seen in Minneapolis and elsewhere, the current surge in immigration enforcement has not only disrupted the lives of non-US citizens (including some with authorization to live and work in the US), it has brought harm and trauma to US citizens as well. While physical harms grab headlines, emotional harms are also present. Seeing a friend or classmate arrested or learning that a friend or classmate has lost a family member to deportation, can have long-term impacts on children who are in an early stage of development.

My family and I are US citizens. However, as a parent, I dread the possibility of having to explain to my daughter why masked immigration enforcement officers entered her school. I dread the feelings of sadness and anger that would result if a cherished classmate were to be taken. I worry about the impacts that such an event might have on her feelings of safety, her engagement with school, and her ability to learn. I hope these things never occur, both for my family and for other families, but they appear increasingly possible. By ensuring the safety of students at school, LD 2106 would help to protect both US citizen children, like my daughter, and students from immigrant and refugee families.

LD 2106 takes a thoughtful and measured approach, providing clear guidance and offering much-needed protection to workers, students, patients and community members. It does not obstruct law enforcement, but instead assures that due process is respected and that schools, health care facilities and libraries are able to remain places of learning, healing, and connection. It will benefit individuals, families, and our state.

For these reasons, I ask members of the Judiciary Committee to vote “ought to pass” on LD 2106. Thank you.