

Testimony in support of **LD 537 – An Act to Prohibit the Doxing of a Minor and to Authorize a Related Civil Action**

Greetings Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn, and honorable members of the Committee on Judiciary. My name is Chris McLaughlin, and I am the proud Executive Director of the Maine Chapter of the National Association of Social Workers (NASW ME). On behalf of our over 1,000 members here in Maine, I'm honored to share thoughts on this important piece of proposed legislation.

NASW ME would like to take this time to offer our support for LD 537, and we thank Representative Sachs for her leadership and advocacy on this important issue. This bill not only seeks to prevent harm by addressing the unethical disclosure of personal identifying information without consent but also empowers families and guardians to take decisive action to protect minors who are victimized by such reprehensible actions.

Doxing, as defined in the bill, encompasses the knowing dissemination of sensitive personal details intended to harm an individual. For minors, the repercussions of such actions can be particularly severe, affecting their mental health, physical safety, and future well-being. The digital environment has expanded the reach and impact of such attacks, making them more damaging and enduring. It is therefore imperative that our legislative framework responds to these evolving threats. These are serious violations that deserve no place in our society, particularly when directed at younger individuals who are less equipped to protect themselves. This bill represents a necessary step in adapting our legal protections to the realities of our increasingly digital world, where personal information can too easily be used as a weapon against the vulnerable.

Furthermore, the bill prudently provides for civil action to be brought by family members, guardians, or legal representatives. This aspect of the bill is crucial, as it ensures that those responsible for the welfare of minors have the necessary legal tools to act decisively. Offering remedies such as injunctive relief, actual damages, compensatory damages, and punitive damages acknowledges the depth of the trauma doxing can cause and provides a tangible means of addressing it.

While the bill also outlines specific defenses to ensure that lawful and constitutionally protected activities are not unduly hindered, it maintains a clear focus on protecting minors from targeted harm. This balance underscores the bill's commitment to upholding fundamental rights while addressing specific, egregious behaviors that threaten the safety and security of minors.

As a proponent of children's rights and digital safety, NASW ME urges all members of the committee to consider the profound impact that doxing has on the physical and psychological health of children. Discussion and debate about policy issues are an essential and healthy part of our Democracy. However, I hope we can all agree that violating the privacy and safety of children as a function of these activities has no place in our state.

Thank you for considering this vital legislation. We hope for your support in moving this bill forward to safeguard our minors from the dangers of doxing and to reinforce the responsible use of digital platforms as spaces for safe and constructive engagement.

Thank you for your time and consideration,



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