

Ann Maksymowicz
Cumberland / MSAD51
LD 1939

To: Sen. Deschaumbault, Rep. Warren, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety

From: Ann Maksymowicz, 171 Tuttle Rd, Cumberland 04022

Sen. Deschaumbault, Rep. Warren and members of the Criminal Justice and Public Safety Committee, my name is Ann Maksymowicz. I live in the town of Cumberland and I serve on the MSAD#51 Board of Directors. I am writing today to testify in support of LD 1939 “An Act To Protect School Administration Officials from Harassment and Abuse,” sponsored by Senator Breen and Representative Moriarty.

Our district experienced a very public campaign of harassment, intimidation, and abuse from June 2020 through the election in June 2021. The precipitating event was a statement issued by our district’s Equity Leadership Steering Committee—of which I’m a member. This statement was in support of racial justice and condemned anti-Black racism and white supremacy following the murders of Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery, and George Floyd.

A disgruntled parent in the district began speaking out in opposition to the statement and all effort of the district to engage in anti-racism and equity work. He brought in another out of state aggressor with a history of harassing elected officials in Falmouth and Scarborough. During this long year various members of the district—a majority of whom also live in the community—were targeted, including: members of the Board of Directors, our Superintendent, and a school social worker.

I became a target in September of 2020 when a sign with my photo on it was installed in the yard of the parent, which happened to be across from the entrance to our campus leading to both our elementary and middle schools. Given the fact the sign didn’t violate any state statute or local ordinance I was left without any recourse but to try to resolve the matter personally. My good faith effort was met with further escalation and harassment. I was issued a criminal trespass warning by the Cumberland Police Department after leaving a note and then politely asking for the sign to be removed, despite the fact I was never asked to leave or not return to the property. The day after I was issued this warning the parent installed a larger version of his sign, this one billboard sized which he self reported to have set rat traps and installed electric fencing to protect it from interference. This sign stayed up, illuminated at all hours, until he took it down in February only in order to prepare his home for sale.

His accomplice went on to create a different sign with my image on it and hateful language which was placed in various locations around Cumberland and Falmouth in advance of my re-election bid. One location included the front of my house, at the roadside, where he took a photograph and emailed it to me, the Board of Directors, Town Council and Chief of Police showing that he knew where I lived. This person told me—and the same group—in one of his other harassing emails that he would come and steal something of mine and destroy it without my knowledge.

I had to drive by these public signs with my photograph as I drove my two young children to their respective preschool and elementary school, the library, and everywhere else in the center of town. The Chief of Police repeatedly refused to talk to these individuals since no state statutes or local ordinances were violated. I was told there was a higher threshold to meeting harassment since I was an elected official.

I was failed by the Town of Cumberland, and my fellow victims were failed. If it were not for the involvement of Cumberland County District Attorney Jonathan Sahrbeck I would not have had any resolution personally. No one should experience similar disparate treatment, for any reason, let alone for serving the community they live or work in. I ask you to vote to approve LD 1939 to fill this gap in current state statute.

Thank you esteemed committee members for ensuring the safety of school board members and school administrators who are serving their communities across the State of Maine.