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Submission to Law Amendments Committee

My name is Jenn MacLean. I am a teacher.

You have heard from countless individuals this week who support our students and our teachers. They have been brave enough to stand up and speak out for what they believe to be true. I would like to do the same.

I would share with you my fear for the future should Bill 75 be passed and a contract imposed upon Nova Scotia's teachers. This fear stems from two separate issues: the loss of fair and collective bargaining in our province, and a disregard for our students' needs.

I consider myself lucky to live in a democratic country where every single citizen has the right to vote for a leader to represent them provincially and federally. I consider myself lucky to live in a country where unions are possible and present. I consider myself lucky to live in a country where free and collective bargaining is a fundamental right. Today, the person chosen as my local leader is not speaking out. Today, free and collective bargaining has been silenced. But today, my union stands strong.

I worry that if Bill 75 is passed, we are one step further away from being a truly democratic society. Our voices become more and more distant, and our society is forever changed. I think about countries around the world where people are fighting to have their voices heard, dying to have their voices heard, and although I know we would all like to think we are far removed from that situation in Nova Scotia, I wonder just exactly how far away we are.

My other concern is my students. I have had the opportunity to work with hundreds of students in Nova Scotia and around the world during the last twelve years as a classroom elementary teacher and Core French specialist. Our lives have changed greatly during this period of time with developments in technology, communication, politics, science, and our global view, just to name a few. Our students' lives and their families' lives have changed as well and they need our support now, more than ever.

Many of our students need supports in order to be ready to learn, and the truth is that those supports are not readily available to them in school. Students dealing with learning difficulties, mental and physical health issues, hunger, trauma, and a variety of other challenges do not have access to guidance counsellors, educational psychologists, resource teachers, behaviour support specialists, autism specialists, speech language pathologists, educational assistants, reading recovery teachers, or program support teachers when needed or as frequently as needed. These students are waiting weeks, months, and years just to be assessed for these services. This equates to a great deal of frustration, anger, lack of confidence, doubt, shame, fear, grief, and an inability to cope without support in the classroom. This means that amongst planning for a variety of learning styles and abilities, teachers are supporting their students in a multitude of ways that lie outside the curriculum.

I consider this part of my job a responsibility and a privilege. The reason I became a teacher is because I want every child I work with to leave my classroom feeling intelligent, proud, and confident. This part of my job also takes time away from planning and teaching, which in turn affects students' learning. Students deserve to be safe and supported at school, and to have access to a top quality education. This is not possible in the current educational environment. Our

students need change now. A committee to look at these issues over the next four years is not the answer. Students need access to services and support now. Teachers need time to develop and plan lessons now. We need your support now.

I would like to conclude with a piece of writing I included in a portfolio during my Bachelor of Education degree. I can't think of any way to express more clearly why I oppose Bill 75. For me, it is about our students and our future. I urge those MLAs who plan to vote in favour of Bill 75 to think about our students when you cast your vote. I urge those Liberal MLAs to have the same courage we aim to instill in our students to stand up and speak out when you are being bullied. Teachers and students have been left without a voice; be brave enough to say what we cannot.

Sincerely,
Jenn MacLean

A Letter to my Student

I am your teacher;

I will do my very best to educate you and protect you, whatever that entails. I will ensure you have the opportunity to learn however you learn best. I will challenge you to know more and to evaluate your present beliefs. I will encourage you to question the familiar and the foreign. I will include you in all the things that I do and give you as many chances to shine as possible. I will share with you my experiences and I will share eagerly in yours. I will care about you and support you and do my best to help you when you need it. I will be your strongest advocate and your proudest fan. I will share with you the celebration of who you are now and who you will someday become.

I am your teacher.

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