



Maine Child Welfare Education

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An open letter to friends, followers, and not-yet-followers of Maine Child Welfare Education:

Each year, immediately following the conclusion of our annual conference, the members of the Maine Child Welfare Education Executive Council begin our efforts to plan the next annual conference. True to form, we began our planning for the 2024 conference in July 2023. Based on feedback from our attendees and supporters, over the course of several weeks, we selected a topic and keynote speaker that we thought would appeal to a broad audience with an interest in children's welfare. We secured the services of Scarlett Lewis, a mother whose son was killed at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, CT on December 14, 2012. Ms. Lewis is the co-founder of the non-profit Jesse Lewis Choose Love Movement, which has provided life skills education programming to more than 2 million children and adults around the world.

Like so many others, our Executive Council was shaken by the events in Lewiston, ME on Wednesday, October 25. The violence, trauma, and tragic loss of life from a mass shooting we had hoped Mainers would never directly experience became a reality, and that reality, of course, gave us great pause. Among the many questions we considered were whether we should proceed with our planning, whether an issue connected to such mass violence might now be "too close to home," and whether we risk re-traumatizing our communities.

After much discussion among our Executive Council and consultation with selected community professionals who encouraged us to lean into the subject matter, we will proceed with our intended topic and keynote speaker, though we will do so with an even greater attention to what our conference will focus on and, perhaps more importantly, what it will not. This will not be a conference about the events leading up to or on October 25, it will not be about the second amendment, and it will not be an "after action report" of any element of the response to the Lewiston shooting.

With an acute awareness of the sensitivity of the topic, the 29th Maine Child Welfare Education Annual Conference will be held on Thursday, June 27, 2024 at the Cross Insurance Center in Bangor, ME. Additional information about Scarlett Lewis and the Choose Love Movement can be found at www.legacy.chooselovemovement.org. Please follow @MaineChildWelfareEducation on Facebook to remain up to date as additional conference details are released.

Respectfully,

The members of the Maine Child Welfare Education Executive Council