

Kassidy Bill goes 'too far'

To the editor:

The "Kassidy Bill" debated in Maine will make it a law that a person must report abuse of Children, Elderly or Incapacitated Adults. The bill requires every person to report suspected cases of abuse, neglect or exploitation. The bill addresses the shocking silence of adults who knew about the recurring abuse of 21-month-old Kassidy Bortner of Rochester, but did nothing to stop it.

Anyone that knows of actual abuse to children and does nothing to stop it obviously lacks human decency and basic courage. Even if a person lacks the courage to intervene, the least they could do is notify the police to stop the abuse. To make this a law though, may be taking this a step too far. This bill includes civil penalties that could be instituted if a person is found guilty of having knowledge of the abuse.

A law that requires us to police our neighbors opens the door to some serious accusations. Average people are going to have to decide what is and isn't abuse. Will yelling or screaming at your child be considered abuse? It could be by some people. Is spanking abuse? A lot of people believe it is. What recourse will be available to those that are wrongly accused?

What next? "Speed kills and someone speeding may kill several people. Are we now going to be required by law to report people that are speeding?"

After a bouncing ball comes a running child. In order to "Save the Children" we may need a law to require reporting speeders. Where is this kind of legislation going to take us?

We cannot legislate morality or decency. To try to do so could put us on a very slippery slope. Neighbors watching neighbors and friends watching friends. Common sense and decency already require people of good conscience to report abuse. People that know of

abuse and do nothing about it, lack conscience.

The people that didn't report abuse in the Cassidy Bortner case will have to live with it for the rest of their lives. Let's not institute a law to report every parent that loses their patience and screams at their kids or slaps a child for mouthing off to them. There is a difference between discipline and abuse. A law that may cause parents to have second thoughts on discipline could cause more children to grow up with a lack of conscience and knowing right from wrong.

Ken Goodall
Exeter