



Testimony of Paul L. Dann, PhD , President Child and Family Provider Network

Senator Rafferty, Representative Brennan and members of the committee on Education and Cultural Affairs, I'm writing today to ask for your support of LD 1309, An Act to Clarify Requirements for Payment of Tuition for Children with Disabilities by The Department of Education's Child Development Services (CDS) System.

By way of introduction my name is Paul L. Dann, PhD and I serve as the President of the Child and Family Provider Network (CFPN). The CFPN is a member organization comprised of 12 child and family serving organizations that provide essential services including intensive educational and therapeutic services for children with Autism or other developmental disabilities across Maine.

The importance of LD 1309 lies in the challenges that exist with the current rate structure for early childhood education for preschoolers as they prepare for a successful entry into kindergarten. Under the current rules CDS does not allow reimbursement for educational services if a child has MaineCare. The problem with this practice is that expenses for preschool education are not included in the MaineCare rate. In fact, the Federal Medicaid rules require that the only allowable costs for Medicaid are costs related to rehabilitation when the need is medically necessary. Because of the Federal rules, education costs are prohibited from being part of any rate for reimbursement.

Given this, CDS's practice of excluding education costs for preschoolers with MaineCare in effect creates stranded costs for the provider of these essential services. Said another way, the providers of these critical services are on the hook to cover essential costs for the children they serve without any means for receiving reimbursement. Our hope is that LD 1309 will ensure that CDS's practice is addressed in order to ensure that an educational reimbursement rate is established and paid by CDS when a child has MaineCare.

The importance of addressing this flaw in how preschool education is funded cannot be overstated. The research is unequivocal. Children that experience preschool and have a successful transition into their K-12 experience are children are more likely to move successfully into adulthood and become contributing members of our society (Shaw, 2022). In addition, the current challenges facing preschool providers are well known and truly represent an existential threat to our ability to provide these critical preschool services. Providing a coherent and consistent funding that includes all the critical elements of effective early childhood education is necessary to ensure the continued delivery of preschool education (National Academies of Science, 2022). LD 1309 represents one important step to ensuring the stability of these these essential services for the children of Maine. Given this the CFPN membership has voted unanimously to request your support of LD 1309

Becket Family of Services– NFI North - Connections for Kids – Community Care – KidsPeace –
Good Will- Hinckley - Sweetser – Waypoint– Day One
Wings for Children and Families – Spurwink – Pathways of Maine

Thank you in advance for your support.

Respectfully Submitted,

Paul L. Dann, PhD
President
Child and Family Provider Network

References

National Academies of Sciences, E. and M., Health and Medicine Division, Division of Behavioral and Social Sciences and Education, Board on Children, Y. and F., Committee on Financing Early Care and Education with a Highly Qualified Workforce, Emily P. Backes, & La Rue Allen. (2018). *Transforming the Financing of Early Care and Education*. National Academies Press.

SHAW, A. (2022). Preschool in America: What Does the Research Suggest Concerning Preschool Programs and Their Impact on Student Performance? *Education*, 142(3), 119–125.