

Janet T. Mills
Governor



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April 13, 2023

Senator Joseph Rafferty, Chair
Representative Michael Brennan, Chair
Members, Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs
100 State House Station
Augusta, ME 04333-0100

Re: LD 684 – *An Act to Implement Pilot Programs with Publicly Funded Day Care and Early Childhood Education*

Senator Rafferty, Representative Brennan, and Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs:

This letter is to provide information regarding LD 684. *An Act to Implement Pilot Programs with Publicly Funded Day Care and Early Childhood Education*. While this bill is a concept draft, the summary indicates that it would establish three publicly funded education programs within child care programs using the Educare model. The bill mandates that Regional School Unit No. 13 (in the Rockland area) be included as one of the three pilot sites.

In 2021, the Legislature passed, and the Governor signed Public Law 2021, Ch. 457, *An Act To Support Children's Health Development and School Success* sponsored by President Jackson, which established the First4Me Early Care and Education Program. First4ME's goal is to improve the social, emotional, educational, and health outcomes for children under the age of six through access to high quality early child care and education that utilizes a two-generation, community-based approach to caring for young children. The model for this program, based on the Elevate Maine/Somerset program implemented by Educare of Central Maine, integrates comprehensive resources and services for children and families into the child care settings to build strength among the participating families, provide supportive services to address identified needs, and ensure a wholistic approach to child development that integrates across both home and the child care setting.

To implement PL 2021, Ch. 457, OCFS has partnered with Educare, Head Start, and the First 10 Initiative to plan, develop, and implement the program. OCFS recently released the RFA for up to five pilot sites. Any community interested in applying, including Rockland, is encouraged to review the RFA and apply. The pilot will also include an evaluation component to determine the impact of the program and feasibility of further expansion of the model.

OCFS would recommend additional time to standup the pilot sites and complete evaluation activities before further expanding the number of pilots or creating a new (or similar) initiative. This proposal would also have a significant general fund cost.

We wanted you to be aware of the above information as you consider this bill going forward. If you have any further questions, please feel free to contact me.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Todd A. Landry". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the typed name.

Dr. Todd A. Landry
Director
Office of Child and Family Services