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April 13, 2023

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

Senator Rafferty, Representative Brennan, and Distinguished Members of the Education and Cultural Affairs Committee:

LD 684, An Act to Implement Pilot Programs with Publicly Funded Day Care and Early Childhood Education, which seeks to develop and implement Educare-like models in three (3) service centers, one of which must be Rockland.

The Educare and Elevate (rural version) models are the basis of LD 1712, which was enacted by Public Law 2021, Chapter 457 and which established the First4ME initiative. First4ME sites will support two-generation, community-based approaches for coordinated birth to kindergarten-entry programs that integrate comprehensive resources and services into childcare settings. Non-profit organizations coordinate early care and education programming as well as whole family coaching through partnerships between Head Start, childcare, Child Development Services, public schools, and other community-based providers/resources.

This bill is consistent with current initiatives designed to better support children and families in the years leading to school entry by coordinating resources to meet needs and by strengthening transitions from the 0-5 years to the K-12 years. These initiatives include the previously noted Educare, Elevate, and First4ME models as well as the First 10 School-Community model. The Department of Education's community school initiative and school-based health centers are other examples of related models.

First4ME is already funded and just getting underway with applications this spring and initial implementation starting this summer. The First 10 Community School pilot will also be implemented over the next three years. Studying the outcomes of these models will help to determine if expansion would address the needs this bill is seeking to target.

This bill also raises some questions that would need to be addressed before implementation. For instance, would school administrative units (SAUs) be responsible for the oversight of the model or would a community partner (e.g., CAP) be taking the lead as happens in the Elevate and Educare models? Will needs assessments be required to determine grantee capacity, and where grant funding should be targeted? To what extent would SAUs be responsible for coordination of Child Development Services (CDS), Head Start, Early Childhood Consultation Project (ECCP), Home Visiting, and other early care and education partners?

The Department of Education remains committed to early childhood learning and is interested in exploring creative opportunities for programs such as this. We do also want to be mindful of the additional requests we place on our SAUs as we seek solutions. The Department will be available to provide additional information on LD 684, An Act to Implement Pilot Programs with Publicly Funded Day Care and Early Childhood Education and respond to any questions during the upcoming work session.

Sincerely,

DocuSigned by:

Lee Anne Larsen

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Director of Early Learning

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