

Letter of Support

LD 2166: An Act to Establish a Grant Program to Increase Postsecondary Educational Opportunities for Students with Intellectual or Developmental Disabilities or Autism Spectrum Disorder.

Dear Senator Daughtry and esteemed members of the Educational and Cultural Affairs committee.

My name is Linda Lee and I have lived in Belfast, Maine for over 11 years. I am the mother, sole surviving parent, and guardian of my son who has the diagnosis of ASD.

I am testifying today in support of LD 2166 and would like to thank all the legislators involved in this bill.

I particularly want to thank my local Representative Jan Dodge who has shown her consistent advocacy for individuals with special needs. I also want to thank Representative Millett for sponsoring this bill. I had the distinct honor of working with Representative Millett when I was co-chair of the LD 924 Taskforce (2021/2022/2023). LD 924 was a grassroots effort initiated by a handful of parents including myself, to investigate why individuals with IDD/ Autism were “falling off the cliff” after High School. One of the recommendations coming out of the LD 924 Final Report was to do exactly what LD 2166 is proposing, i.e.

“Develop and fund statewide accessible post-secondary opportunities...”

<https://legislature.maine.gov/doc/9560>

On a personal level, my son who is now 25 aged out of High School at 21 and has been home with me full time since then. He initially regressed severely and continues even after four years to become very distressed and tearful, demanding to know why he cannot go back to the High School and the Tech Center.

My son is not alone! As part of the work of the LD 924 Taskforce a Parent-to-Parent survey was conducted. The outcomes highlighted both the need and the desire for individuals with IDD and ASD to have access to postsecondary education. [LD 924 Parent Survey Lived Experience.pdf - Google Drive](#)

Furthermore, with postsecondary education these individuals could be better prepared for employment. The LD 924 Parent-to-Parent survey showed that only 12% of adults with IDD/ Autism were:

“Employed in an integrated setting for more than 10 hours per week, earning at least minimum wage.” [LD 924 Parent Survey Lived Experience.pdf - Google Drive](#)

Preparing individuals with IDD or Autism for employment would also benefit employers in Maine, since there is currently such a workforce shortage.

I urge you to please support this bill so these issues can move forward in a positive direction.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully

Linda Lee, RN, BSN, MA

Belfast, Maine.

Attachment: LD 924 Parent-to-Parent Survey