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## Testimony in SUPPORT of LD 896, An Act to Provide Young Children Stable Access to Health Care

### Committee on Health and Human Services

March 25<sup>th</sup>, 2025

Representative Meyer, Senator Ingwersen, and esteemed members of the Committee on Health and Human Services,

My name is Dr. Anne Coates, and I'm a practicing pediatrician and Vice President of the Maine Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics (Maine AAP). I'm writing in support of LD 896, which will ensure that children eligible for MaineCare receive continuous coverage until the age of 6.

During early childhood, well-child visits and routine care are crucial to ensuring children hit developmental milestones and have the start they need to live healthy lives. Stable healthcare coverage in early childhood leads to better long-term health outcomes, reducing emergency room visits and preventable hospitalizations (Georgetown University Health Policy Institute, 2023). When families experience gaps in healthcare coverage and/or financial strains, both routine and emergency care often fall by the wayside. This bill ensures that MaineCare eligible children receive continuous care through some of the most developmentally important years of their lives.

Continuous healthcare coverage until age 6 would help to ensure all children in Maine are about to grow and thrive. Children in low-income and rural communities are disproportionately affected by gaps in Medicaid coverage (Maine Children's Alliance, 2023). Continuous MaineCare coverage ensures all children have equal access to preventive and essential medical care, regardless of their family's income or location in Maine.

LD 896 gets us one step closer to achieving health equity for Maine and ensuring that all Maine children access the care they need during a crucial time in their development. I urge the committee to vote 'Ought to pass' on LD 896, An Act to Provide Young Children Stable Access to Health Care.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Anne Coates, MD, FAAP

Vice President, Maine AAP