



## **MAINE COUNSELING ASSOCIATION**

*A State Branch of the American Counseling Association*

April 3, 2025

### **Testimony in Support of LD 1203 An Act to Provide Grants to Schools That Contract for Behavioral and Mental Health Services**

Senator Joseph Rafferty, Representative Kelly Murphy, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs:

My name is Stan Pelletier, I am a certified school (guidance) counselor and licensed professional clinical counselor (LCPC), and have worked in Maine Schools and communities for over 25 years. I am also the Public Policy Chair for the Maine Counseling Association (MeCA), a state branch of the American Counseling Association (ACA), an organization representing professional counselors. It is in this capacity that I express the support of the MeCA Executive Board for LD 1203.

We are pleased that Maine Legislators are seriously considering ways to support the mental/behavioral well-being of students and families by allocating resources to support unmet needs of students in Maine schools, in particular the mental health needs of children requiring the intervention of clinically trained professionals. To say that Maine children have gone through a lot in the last few years is an understatement. Levels of reported anxiety, depression and suicidality are at historically high levels and rising. Education professionals, counselors, and social workers are facing this tide every day. We believe that all efforts to improve the mental health and well-being of Maine children should be considered, including augmenting funding to schools for hiring school counselors, social workers and clinicians and allocating grant resources for schools to contract for clinical services with trained mental health professionals. Though not delineated in the language of the LD, we wish to ensure that the terms “clinician” or “clinically trained mental health professional” refer to individuals with a minimum of master’s

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level training and appropriate licensure/certification, which includes but is not necessarily limited to Licensed Clinical Professional Counselors (LCPCs) and Licensed Clinical Social Workers (LCSWs).

In closing, let me say that we welcome thoughtful attempts by the legislature to assist educators and school-based mental health professionals in carrying out their vital functions in service to students and families in Maine schools. We, the members of the Executive Board of the Maine Counseling Association, are ready to assist and consult with members of the legislature if called upon. We are committed as an organization to upholding the standards of practice of counseling professionals in service to Maine citizens. Thank you for your time and attention, and for the opportunity to share our views with the membership of the Joint Standing Committee.

Best regards,

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