



Testimony in Support of LD 1203 An Act to Provide Grants to Schools that Contract for Behavioral and Mental Health Services.

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Senator Rafferty, Representative Murphy and Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs thank you for the opportunity to speak today.

My name is Kate Marble, and I am a Licensed Clinical Social Worker residing in Temple, Maine. I serve as the Clinical Director at Health Affiliates Maine, a statewide behavioral health agency with headquarters in Auburn. Our organization has the privilege of serving more than 10,000 Mainers annually through case management, outpatient counseling, and psychiatric medication management.

I am here today to express our strong support for LD 1203.

At Health Affiliates Maine, we are currently facing a critical shortage of accessible outpatient services for children. Our referral team speaks with parents every day, informing them that the average wait time for a child to begin outpatient therapy is between 6 to 8 months. For many families, this news is devastating as they feel at a loss to help their child.

The challenge is even greater because many of these mental health services must occur outside of school hours. Afternoon appointment slots fill quickly as families struggle to balance work obligations with their child's needs. In some cases, attending therapy during the school day can mean missing up to a half-day of instruction every week — a significant academic burden.

Meanwhile, families turn to schools hoping for support, only to discover that school-based counseling is often unavailable or stretched too thin to meet demand. It is heartbreaking for a parent to watch their child struggle with anxiety, depression, trauma, or behavioral challenges — and to be told that help is simply not available.

And as that wait drags on, the symptoms worsen. Children who might have responded to early intervention eventually require higher levels of care. We've all heard the stories: kids waiting for weeks in emergency departments or languishing on waitlists for in-home support. These situations are not



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just avoidable — they are unacceptable. When considering this bill, I ask you to consider what you would want for a child in your life. Where would you most like them to get the support, they need?

Expanding access to school-based mental health services is one of the most direct, effective ways to intervene early, reduce suffering, and prevent crisis. LD 1203 represents a critical step in making sure that children can get the care they need — where and when they need it.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I urge you to support this important bill. This investment will pay off.

Respectfully,



Kate Marble, LCSW

Clinical Director