

Kate Williamson
Westbrook
LD 1421

Dear Senator Ingwerson and Rep Meyer and members of the committee on Health & Human Services.

Thank you for allowing me to address the committee. My name is Kate Williamson, I am a resident of Westbrook, and I am submitting this testimony as a concerned Maine citizen. I am submitting testimony in support of LD 1421, An Act to Clarify Parental Notifications Regarding Child Care Facility Investigations.

Recent events in Cumberland County make it clear this legislation is a first step in ensuring safety of Maine's children. Last year, a daycare owner was found by DHHS to have administered a sleep aid, melatonin, to children under her care without parental permission. Despite violating Maine's daycare licensing standards, and despite one parent receiving notification from DHHS that their child was named "as a victim of abuse/neglect," the daycare provider continues to operate. This bill would require daycare operators who commit violations to notify parents.

It should be clear this is the bare minimum. This legislation needs to go further. Similar incidents in New Hampshire resulted in felony charges brought for endangering the welfare of a child. The goal should be to prevent violations, not merely set up reporting structures after they occur.

Researchers still know very little about the long-term effects of regular melatonin usage among children, leading several organizations such as the American Academy of Pediatrics and the American Academy of Sleep Medicine to urge abundant caution in usage. I was alarmed to learn that this daycare is still allowed to operate after the findings of the DHHS investigation; as a developmental psychologist, I am deeply familiar with the research underscoring the importance of safe childcare for not only children, but for families and communities. The health of Maine's communities and economy is heavily reliant on parents being able to trust that their children are safe in childcare settings.

I urge the committee to amend the legislation to include penalties for unauthorized administration of sleep aid medications to minor children in daycare settings. Please vote "ought to pass" with these changes.

Thank you for your time.