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Testimony in SUPPORT of LD 858, An Act to Ensure Behavioral and Mental Health Services Are Available to Students by Providing Grants to Schools That Contract for Those Services

Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs

April 8, 2025

Senator Rafferty, Representative Brennan, and distinguished members of the Education and Cultural Affairs Committee:

My name is Madeleine DesFosses, and I am submitting this testimony on behalf of the Maine Chapter, American Academy of Pediatrics (Maine AAP). The Maine AAP is a professional organization of 300 pediatricians and subspecialists dedicated to protecting the health of Maine children and adolescents. We write in support of LD 858.

As pediatric providers, our members see firsthand the impact that mental and behavioral health challenges have on patients' ability to thrive both in and out of the classroom. Schools are uniquely positioned to identify and address mental health needs early, but too often, they lack the resources to do so effectively.

By providing grants to schools that contract with licensed behavioral health providers, LD 858 removes a major barrier to care. This legislation ensures that more Maine students, no matter their school district, have access to the support they need to thrive academically, socially, and emotionally.

The Maine AAP urges the committee to support this important step toward addressing the youth mental health crisis in our state. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Madeleine DesFosses

Advocacy and Public Health Manager, Maine AAP