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Testimony of Meg Helming before
the Committee on Health and Human Services
in support of

LD 1469: An Act to Clarify the Quality Rating System for Child Care Services in Maine
April 23, 2025

Senator Ingwersen, Representative Meyer, and distinguished members of the Health and Human Services Committee, my name is Meg Helming and I'm the Chief Operating Officer at the YMCA Alliance of Northern New England, which represents the 15 YMCAs in Maine. The YMCA strongly supports LD 1469: *An Act to Clarify the Quality Rating System for Child Care Services in Maine*.

This bill offers a practical and important clarification: that early childhood programs already accredited by national organizations—such as the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC)—be recognized with the highest rating within Maine's Rising Stars for ME quality rating system.

Both the Penobscot Bay YMCA and the Bath Area Family YMCA have achieved and maintained NAEYC accreditation, which is a nationally recognized mark of excellence. This process is intensive, involving comprehensive assessments of curriculum, staff qualifications, family engagement, health and safety standards, and continuous quality improvement. In other words, these programs are already operating at the highest level of quality.

Requiring programs to undergo an additional, separate accreditation process through Rising Stars for ME is duplicative, time consuming, and does not meaningfully enhance program quality. This redundancy consumes significant staff time and administrative resources—time that could be better spent working directly with children and families.

Importantly, aligning these systems would provide direct benefits to families as well. Families that attend programs that have a Star 5 rating under Rising Stars for ME are eligible for higher state child care tax credits, and families participating in the Child Care Affordability Program (CCAP) see reduced parent fees. Recognizing national accreditation within the state system ensures families can access these benefits without forcing providers through duplicative hoops.

This bill strengthens support for Maine's childcare infrastructure by recognizing quality where it already exists, streamlining systems for providers, and expanding financial benefits for families. It ensures no compromise in standards—only common sense alignment. We urge you to support LD 1469.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Meg Helming

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