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Testimony of Penobscot Bay YMCA CEO Whitney Files 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 honorable members of the Committee on Health and Human Services, my name is Whitney Files and I'm the CEO at the Penobscot Bay YMCA in Rockland and Rockport. I support *LD 1469: An Act to Clarify the Quality Rating System for Child Care Services in Maine*.

At the Penobscot Bay YMCA, we are proud to be the largest provider of child care in Knox County. We offer high-quality, licensed early childhood education, after-school programming, and summer day camps. Our mission is rooted in accessibility and affordability, especially for working families. Across our three early childhood centers, we care for children ages 6 weeks through 5 years with full-day, year-round programming from 7AM to 5PM.

We are especially proud to be one of only three programs in Knox County to hold a 5-star rating within Maine's Rising Stars for ME quality system. And we have also been nationally accredited through the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) for nearly 15 years.

NAEYC accreditation is a gold standard in early childhood education. Achieving and maintaining it requires comprehensive evaluation of curriculum, staff qualifications, family engagement, health and safety, and continuous quality improvement. It is not a simple box-checking exercise; it is a rigorous, ongoing demonstration of excellence. Our commitment to quality is already validated by this nationally respected process.

Under the current system, even NAEYC-accredited programs must also complete Maine's separate Rising Stars for ME accreditation to be officially recognized with a 5-star rating. This is an unnecessary duplication of effort that adds significant strain to our already overstretched administrative team.

Like many providers across the state, we face persistent staffing shortages. Our supervisors frequently step into classrooms to support teachers and children and to maintain ratios. Requiring supervisors to invest additional time in a second, redundant accreditation process does not improve quality—it takes time away from direct support to children, families, and staff.

This bill offers a commonsense solution. LD 1469 supports what's best for Maine by recognizing the existing excellence of NAEYC-accredited programs, easing unnecessary administrative burdens on providers, and ensuring families can access the quality programs that they deserve—all while streamlining systems without compromising quality so more Maine children can thrive in top-tier programs.

Thank you for your consideration of this bill.

Respectfully submitted,
Whitney Files

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