



FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT®  
FOR HEALTHY LIVING  
FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

Testimony of Meg Helming before  
the Committee on Education & Cultural Affairs  
in support of

**LD 1689: An Act to Implement the Recommendations of the Commission to Study Expansion of Public Preschool and Early Care and Education**  
May 1, 2025

Senator Rafferty, Representative Murphy, and honorable members of the Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs, my name is Meg Helming and I'm here representing the Maine YMCAs in support of LD 1689: *An Act to Implement the Recommendations of the Commission to Study Expansion of Public Preschool and Early Care and Education*.

Collectively, the 15 YMCAs in Maine are the largest childcare provider in the state. Currently, three YMCAs in Maine partner with their local school districts to deliver public Pre-K programming on site at the Y. This mixed-delivery model provides young children with high-quality, developmentally appropriate education in a safe and nurturing YMCA environment, while also meeting the needs of working families by offering full-day care in a single, consistent location. We strongly support policy efforts to expand access to mixed-delivery public Pre-K, recognizing its vital role in supporting working parents, strengthening child outcomes, and bolstering Maine's workforce and economy.

I understand that there is an amendment to this bill that I have not yet had a chance to review in its final form, so I'm going to speak in support of the recommendations put forward by the Commission to Study Expansion of Public Preschool and Early Care and Education, which reflect a thoughtful and comprehensive approach to strengthening Maine's early childhood education system. These recommendations include: providing increased and sustained funding, including support for start-up costs, to help more communities launch and sustain high-quality public preschool programs; providing greater flexibility in credentialing requirements to help us grow and retain a strong early childhood workforce; establishing statewide and regional coordination to enhance outreach and build effective partnerships, especially in mixed-delivery models, and aligning standards across the Department of Health & Human Services and Department of Education to help reduce barriers for providers and create a more cohesive, accessible system for families and educators alike.

The YMCA shares the Commission's concerns about Maine's current public preschool funding model and its potential to limit the expansion of mixed-delivery, full-day Pre-K. The existing EPS formula does not account for the increased staffing needs when transitioning from half-day to full-day programming, nor does it distinguish between part-time and full-time models—creating financial disincentives for SAUs to expand services. We strongly encourage further study of this funding structure, particularly to assess how it may hinder the ability of community-based providers to partner in the delivery of public Pre-K. We also support exploring alternative funding mechanisms, including models used in other states, that allow providers to directly access public funds at a per-pupil rate. Doing so could create a more equitable, flexible, and sustainable system that better supports working families and meets the goals of universal access.

I urge you to vote ought to pass on LD 1689 to support increased access to public pre-k programming for Maine children.

Respectfully submitted,

Meg Helming  
YMCA Alliance of Northern New England

**Contact:** Meg Helming, YMCA Alliance of Northern New England  
**P:** 207.232.9896 **E:** [meg.helming@nneymcas.org](mailto:meg.helming@nneymcas.org)