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**Testimony 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 members of the Joint  
Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs,

My name is Mary-Rita Reinhard, and I am the Interim Executive Director at the Maine Community Action Partnership, a statewide organization dedicated to improving the quality of life of Maine people by advocating for, promoting and supporting the work of the Maine community action agencies. We respectfully submit the following testimony 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.

Our state's greatest resource is our people, and our state's policies shape people's possibilities. In Community Action, we create conditions that invite children to learn and adults to apply their skills, tapping into the hidden potential in our communities. Through our Whole Family approach, we build a family's capacity for sustained stability and economic growth. We invest in the family's well-being, we let them drive their own story, and we have tangible success.

LD 1689 helps streamline and grow the collaborative work that is already happening between the early childhood services provided by Maine's community action agencies and public preschools. Nine of Maine's community action agencies administer Head Start and Early Head Start programs, and these programs provide important early childhood education and wraparound services across Maine. Increasingly, these programs partner with public pre-K classrooms to provide a wide range of services; many children are able to receive a public pre-K education while also receiving services that Head Start provides such as health services, family coaching, and more. These partnerships mean that Head Start brings resources to support pre-K education such as staffing, funding, or other resources that mutually strengthen both programs.

However, we know there are many inefficiencies in certain aspects of the current system, as identified by the Commission to Study Expansion of Public Preschool and Early Care and Education. In particular, the Commission identified duplication and inefficiencies in the current credentialing framework, and differing regulations across different settings. Community action agencies deal with these inefficiencies all the time when attempting to integrate Head Start services with public pre-K. We need alignment between the credentialing systems for these programs; as it stands, the current dual processes are duplicative, burdensome, and fragmented. Streamlining this process allows community action agencies and public pre-K providers to maximize the

impact of pooling resources, delivering a cost-efficient system that better serves young children.

Aligning early childhood services and the regulations governing them has the potential to move mixed delivery pre-K forward in a major way. Between the Head Start and child care services that community action agencies offer, there are many opportunities for pre-K to be offered in different settings. For instance, to meet the needs of working families a school district may partner in a mixed delivery model to offer public pre-K enrollment with a full working day Head Start classroom or with a family child care home, meeting established credentialing requirements for staff and high quality early education standards. This mixed delivery model allows parents to choose early care settings that best meet the needs of their family and of their children. It supports shared goals of high-quality care while ensuring flexibility in how that quality is delivered. LD 1689 creates a pathway for this to be more viable. It would also greatly reduce the need for transitions where a young child must move between different provider locations throughout the day.

We know Maine families are positioned to thrive when they have the tools and resources necessary to sustain themselves and grow their potential. LD 1689 builds on crucial recommendations to expand public pre-K and improve early childhood education and is a vital step to put Maine's children on the path to success. We urge the committee to vote Ought to Pass on LD 1689.

Sincerely,

Mary-Rita Reinhard

*Mary-Rita Reinhard*

Interim Executive Director  
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