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5/1/2025

Senator Rafferty, Chair
Representative Noonan-Murphy, Chair
Members, Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs
100 State House Station
Augusta, ME 04333-0100

Re: LD 1689 – *An Act to Implement the Recommendations of the Commission to Study Expansion of Public Preschool and Early Care and Education*

Senator Rafferty, Representative Noonan-Murphy and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs, thank you for the opportunity to provide information neither for nor against LD 1689, *An Act to Implement the Recommendations of the Commission to Study Expansion of Public Preschool and Early Care and Education*.

This bill would implement recommendations from the Commission to Study Expansion of Public Preschool and Early Care and Education through a number of initiatives. Specific to DHHS, this bill would require OCFS to collaborate with the Department of Education and stakeholders to study standards and rules for early childhood educators and providers to best align them across sectors and reduce barriers to expansion of preschool programs.

OCFS supports efforts to expand access to high quality early care and education, including public preschool/pre-k programs. The premise of the work proposed in this bill aligns with existing work OCFS has underway with the Center for Early Learning Funding Equity (CELFE), as well as collaboration between OCFS and DOE around early childhood educator certification as part of the Pre-K Advisory Team. The work of both of these groups support continuing efforts to reduce barriers to building the ECE workforce. However, OCFS is concerned that the language of this bill would bifurcate efforts to study early educator credentialing with the Department of Education (DOE) directed to study credentialing procedures and policies independently and DHHS directed to work with DOE on the same. OCFS believes a united effort between DHHS, DOE, and institutions of higher education would be more beneficial given the many intersections between the two distinct categories of professionals.

Currently, educators who receive their certification through DOE are qualified to provide early care and education in licensed child care programs and SAUs while child care providers and early educators who are trained and earn credentials through DHHS's Professional Development Network (PDN) are qualified to provide early care and education only in licensed child care programs. Collaboration between DOE and DHHS is going to be key to reducing barriers to the mobility of professionals between the two distinct categories.

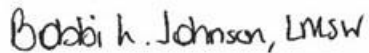
OCFS is also concerned that this bill contains positions but does not clearly outline the intended

role of those individuals. The positions are to be housed within DOE but given the required collaboration and cross-Departmental nature of this work, OCFS would encourage the Committee to consider a better division of these proposed positions between DOE and OCFS, as well as considering and clearly outlining in the legislation the intent behind creation of these positions.

OCFS appreciates the opportunity to provide this information.

Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions during your deliberation of this bill.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Bobbi L. Johnson, LMSW". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Bobbi L. Johnson, LMSW
Director
Office of Child and Family Services
Maine Department of Health and Human Services