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

**LD 1859: An Act to Improve Access to Child Care and Early Childhood Education by Establishing
Regional Resource Hubs**

May 15, 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.

We strongly support of LD 1859, which proposes the creation of regional early childhood learning and development resource hubs. These hubs would play a vital role in strengthening the early childhood ecosystem by addressing the interconnected needs of families, providers, educators, and employers. YMCAs across Maine are deeply embedded in their local communities and are proud to be the largest provider of early care and education in the state. We see firsthand the persistent challenges families face in finding affordable, high-quality care, and the systemic pressures that make it difficult for providers to sustain and grow their programs. LD 1859 addresses these realities in several critical ways:

- **Coordination and Navigation:** Families often struggle to understand and access the services and supports available to them. By serving as regional navigators, these hubs would help families locate childcare, connect with public programs like CCAP and Head Start, and access community-based services that support whole-family well-being.
- **Regional Planning and Partnership:** The requirement that each hub conduct a regional needs assessment and convene partners across sectors—including schools, employers, and health systems—will ensure that local solutions are informed by local data and collaboration.
- **Support for Providers and Workforce:** From shared services models to professional development and technical assistance, the hubs would directly support providers in expanding their capacity and navigating complex state systems—helping retain and grow a stable early childhood workforce.
- **Public-Private Leverage:** The proposed 50% matching requirement and local partner boards demonstrate a smart model of shared responsibility, encouraging both public investment and community ownership.

In short, LD 1859 represents a forward-thinking, place-based strategy to improve the coordination, quality, and reach of Maine's early childhood services. YMCAs across the state are ready and willing to serve as partners in this work, and we believe these resource hubs can serve as a foundational element in advancing equity and access for Maine's children and families.

We respectfully urge the committee to vote "Ought to Pass" on LD 1859. Thank you for your commitment to Maine's youngest learners.

Sincerely,

Meg Helming

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