



January 22, 2026

Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs

Re: LD 2114 An Act Regarding Public Preschool Programs Serving Children Who Are 3 Years of Age

Chair Rafferty, Chair Murphy, and Distinguished Members of the Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs

My name is Carrie Woodcock, and I serve as the Executive Director of Maine Parent Federation (MPF), Maine's federally funded Parent Training and Information Center and Family-to-Family Health Information Center. As both a parent of two young adults with different abilities and the leader of an organization that supports families statewide, I appreciate the opportunity to provide our written testimony.

MPF submits testimony neither for nor against LD 2114, An Act Regarding Public Preschool Programs Serving Children Who Are 3 Years of Age. We support the expansion of the definition of "public preschool program" to include both 3- and 4-year-old children. Expanding access to early learning opportunities is consistent with the intent of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) to ensure that young children with disabilities receive appropriate early intervention and preschool services.

Our concern relates specifically to the structure of the proposed subsidy. As drafted, the bill appears to provide start-up funding only for public preschool programs serving children who are both 3 years old and identified as having a disability. This approach may unintentionally incentivize the creation of classrooms composed exclusively of 3-year-old children with disabilities.

Under IDEA Part B, states must ensure that children with disabilities are educated in the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE), meaning they must be educated with their nondisabled peers to the maximum extent appropriate (20 U.S.C. §1412(a)(5)(A)). Maine's own regulations, the Maine Unified Special Education Regulations (MUSER), reinforce this requirement by mandating that school administrative units provide access to age-appropriate settings with typically developing peers whenever possible (MUSER §VI.2).

If Maine subsidizes preschool expansion only for classrooms serving children with disabilities, we are concerned that the resulting programs will not meet IDEA's and MUSER's LRE requirements. Research consistently demonstrates that inclusive early childhood environments—where children with and without disabilities learn together—improve outcomes for all students, including gains in communication, social development, and academic readiness.

MPF supports efforts to expand preschool access for 3-year-olds, but we urge the Committee to ensure that any funding mechanism aligns with federal and state requirements for inclusion and does not inadvertently promote segregated settings.

Thank you for your time and for your commitment to Maine's children and families.

Respectfully,  
Carrie Woodcock  
Executive Director  
Maine Parent Federation