



Maine Developmental Disabilities Council

January 22, 2026

Testimony Neither For Nor Against LD 2114 – An Act Regarding Public Preschool Programs Serving Children Who Are 3 Years of Age

Senator Rafferty, Representative Murphy, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs:

My name is Nancy Cronin, and I am the Executive Director of the Maine Developmental Disabilities Council (MDDC).¹ Please accept this testimony **Neither For Nor Against** An Act Regarding Public Preschool Programs Serving Children Who Are 3 Years of Age.

We appreciate that Maine is in the process of transitioning IDEA Part B §619 services from Child Developmental Services to local school districts. We support providing subsidies to schools to assist with the inclusion of three-year-olds with disabilities in public preschool settings. However, we do not support the creation of siloed programs in which three-year-olds with disabilities are educated separately from their typically developing peers.

We urge you to amend this bill to provide subsidies for all three-year-olds, regardless of disability status. Research and best practice consistently demonstrate that children with disabilities benefit most from inclusive educational environments, where they can engage in parallel and cooperative play with typically developing children. These settings provide natural opportunities to observe and model developmentally appropriate behaviors. When children with disabilities are placed exclusively with other children with disabilities, challenging or limiting behaviors may be unintentionally reinforced.

Such segregation is inconsistent with the spirit of IDEA and does not reflect best practice. We respectfully request that the bill be amended to support inclusive early childhood education for all three-year-olds, for the benefit of children with and without disabilities.

Thank you for the opportunity to present testimony.

Nancy Cronin, MA
Executive Director

¹ Councils on Developmental Disabilities were created through the Developmental Disabilities Assistance and Bill of Rights Act (DD Act) in 1970. Maine's DD Council has been advocating for individuals with developmental disabilities for over 50 years. The DD Council is a federally funded, independent organization with members from across the state, including persons with disabilities, family members, and representatives of public and private agencies which provide services and/or funding for services for individuals with developmental disabilities. As required in federal law, we are involved in advocacy, capacity building and systemic change activities, with the goal that individuals with developmental and other disabilities of all ages are fully included, integrated, and involved in their communities and the decisions impacting their lives.