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Maine Association for the
Education of Young Children

**Testimony of Heather Marden
On behalf of the Maine Association for the Education of Young Children**

**In support of LD 948: An Act to Create a Liaison Position Between the Department of Education
and the Department of Health and Human Services on Early Childhood Education Matters**

3/30/23

Senator Rafferty, Representative Brennan, distinguished members of the Education and Cultural Affairs Committee, my name is Heather Marden, Co-Executive Director of the Maine Association for the Education of Young Children (MaineAEYC). MaineAEYC promotes high-quality early learning for each and every child, birth through age 8, by connecting practice, policy, and research. We advance a diverse, dynamic early childhood profession and support all who care for, educate, and work on behalf of young children.

Early childhood education programs, funding, and resources are shared across the Department of Education and Department of Health and Human Services. These resources and funding can include sectors of public school education, child care programs, family child care, Head Start, Child Development Services and families of young children.

Years ago, Maine had a system of Resource Development Centers that supported connections for the child care sector and families to information and resources that support young children. Those centers are now gone and Maine has built the Help Me Grow program which supports families in accessing resources for their children. However, there is still a gap in how child care programs receive information and connect to state resources in a more coordinated manner.

With the growth of child care and publicly funded pre-K partnerships, we especially see this gap as programs struggle with how and who they access information from working between the programs and resources of multiple state departments.

By supporting a liaison between DHHS and DOE, this is a bridge forward in bringing cohesion to programming and shared information throughout the early childhood sector. This can strengthen coordination and alignment on behalf of those providing the care and education in multiple settings. We also feel this supports capacity building and can enhance the work of the Children's Cabinet to approach this liaison position as someone representing the early childhood sector and identifying the communication and resource needs for the educators working directly in the field and in these systems.

Thank you for considering my testimony and I ask you to support LD 948.