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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

Senator Rafferty, Representative Brennan, and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs, my name is Amanda Collamore and I represent House District 68, Pittsfield, Clinton, Burnham, and Troy. I stand before you today to present **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**. The purpose of this bill is to ensure the Department of Education, in the office of Early Learning, has a early childhood education specialist whose job is specifically to liaise between the Department of Education and the Department of Health and Human Services. Additionally, they will be the contact person for all early childhood educators to reach out to with any questions and/or concerns they may have.

As an early childhood educator who worked with young children, I know first hand the challenges of navigating the complex and often confusing systems of both the Department of Education and the Department of Health of and Human Services. This bill would be a both the step forward in addressing this issue and ensuring that early childhood educators have the resources and support they need to provide the best possible care and education for young children.

When I was looking to open a childcare center in my hometown, I called the Department of Education to obtain information on the licensing process. The person I spoke with directed me to the Department of Health and Human Services. DHHS was able to answer some of my questions, but I was directed back to the Dept. of Ed. for others. This very confusing, cyclical

process could be enough to deter a very capable, highly qualified individual from investing in a childcare center or a family childcare business in an area that is in great need – which is most of the State at this point. One of the key reasons I put this bill in is to help eliminate the significant time and energy that early childhood educators currently spend bouncing between the two departments to get their questions answered. Currently, early childhood educators must navigate two separate systems, with different regulations and requirements, which can be overwhelming and confusing for even the most practiced educator. This bill would create a position that serves as a single

point of contact a position that serves as a single point of contact for early childhood educators seeking guidance times and energy, but it would improve communication between the two departments, ultimately benefitting the children and families of Maine.

Furthermore, this bill would help to ensure that early childhood educators have access to the most up-to-date and accurate information on the best practices for early childhood education and care. The specialist in the liaison position would be responsible for being aware of new research and development in the field and disseminating this information to educators in an accessible and user-friendly manner. This would help to ensure that early childhood educators have easy access to the latest best practices to provide the highest quality care and education.

In summary, in a time where the need for high quality early childhood educators and childcare centers is greater than ever, we need to remove barriers and create an easier path for educators to access the information they need to open centers in the State. I ask you to please support **LD 948** as a small, but important step in supporting the well-being and development of Maine's young children and ensuring that early childhood educators have the resources and support they need to provide the best possible care and education.

Thank you for your time and I'd be happy to answer any questions you may have.