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Testimony of Scott Hayward, LCSW. State director for Pathways of Maine. In support of LD1309.
An act to clarify requirements for payment of tuition for children with disabilities by the department of
education's child development services system.

Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs, April 13, 2023

Good afternoon senator Rafferty, Representative Brennan and members of the Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs. Thank you for the opportunity to offer testimony in support of LD 1309.

My name is Scott Hayward. I am the executive director for Pathways of Maine. At Pathways we provide home based services to children with behavioral health and developmental challenges and their families. We provide home based services in 14 counties.

We also have a school designed to serve children pre-school age through graduation that face developmental challenges, located in Brunswick on the old naval base.

As you have heard from the other speakers, there is no substitute for early intervention services. I have been a social worker working with children in Maine for the last 30 years and I can tell you from my own experience that the old adage is true. An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.

When children are born with developmental challenges, it can lead to a long road of social and educational struggles. This absolutely doesn't have to be the case. Early intervention services can help children meet milestones and overcome early obstacles to find success in their schools and communities.

Unfortunately, due to years of inadequate funding, children have to wait for a rare opening, often never getting one. Or, they have to travel far outside of their local school district to access the services. Both of these are poor alternatives to making sure kids have access when they need it to early intervention services close to home.

Allowing these services to erode, has also led to an increased need for more intensive and expensive services later in students' lives. Often times, segregating them from their peers.

Our preschool aged program has shrunk from serving more than 20 students about 5 years ago, to only 5 today. Without the additional funding this bill would provide, we may not be able to offer any pre-school programming next year at all. This is because we do not receive funding for the educational costs of this service which include: facilities, maintenance, teachers, supplies, adaptive playgrounds, and many other fixed costs.

We want to be able to return access to this service to our communities. But we can't do that without a daily rate for the educational supports that LD1309 seeks to provide.

Thank you,

Scott Hayward, LCSW

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