



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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AUGUSTA, MAINE 04333-0002
(207) 287-1400
TTY: MAINE RELAY 711

Lydia V. Crafts

4 Mills Rd. Box 13
Newcastle, ME 04553
Phone: (207) 593-2664
Lydia.Crafts@legislature.maine.gov

April 13, 2023

Testimony of Rep. Lydia Crafts in support of
LD 1309, An Act to Clarify Requirements for Payment of Tuition for Children with Disabilities by the Department of Education's Child Development Services System
Before the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs

Good afternoon Senator Rafferty, Representative Brennan and members of the Education and Cultural Affairs Committee. I am Representative Lydia Crafts from Newcastle, and I have the privilege of serving House District 46. I am here today to testify in support of LD 1309, *An Act to Clarify Requirements for Payment of Tuition for Children with Disabilities by the Department of Education's Child Development Services System*.

Community-based special purpose preschools are critical to the state's special education system. They provide federally required therapeutic and education services to hundreds of 3-5 year olds with disabilities. These services are vital for early intervention and education services for children with disabilities.

MaineCare payments made to Special Purpose Preschools and school districts are only approved for a child's therapeutic and medically necessary support, not for educational costs for 3-5 year olds. LD 1309 will fix this long-standing problem by directing CDS to work with providers to establish and provide payments of an appropriate daily rate for the educational component of services provided by Special Purpose Preschools.

In my previous work outside of the Legislature, I was the director of a special education behavior program serving children ages 5-15. Access to special purpose preschools was critical in setting children up for success in their elementary years. The provision of specialized services, in combination with high quality educational programming, created a stark contrast with peers who didn't receive those same critical services. In my professional experience, the education and therapeutic services in combination help children develop a broad and comprehensive foundation on which their future education builds.

At a time when our state is out of compliance with IDEA/FAPE and when hundreds of children are on waitlists for early educational services, I urge the committee to support this bill to help ensure the state is supporting the critical early childhood supports required under federal law.