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Testimony of Annie Colaluca before
the Committee on Education & Cultural Affairs
in support of

**LD 1799: An Act to Expand Maine's High-quality Early Learning and Care for Children
by Increasing Public Preschool Opportunities in Communities**

May 10, 2023

Senator Rafferty, Representative Brennan, and honorable members of the Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs, my name is Annie Colaluca and I'm the Preschool Director for the Bath Area Family YMCA. I support LD 1799 *An Act to Expand Maine's High-quality Early Learning and Care for Children by Increasing Public Preschool Opportunities in Communities*

Collectively, the 15 YMCAs in Maine are the largest childcare provider in the state. We serve thousands of children in our early childhood education programs, before/after school programs, and summer camp. These programs provide children with safe, nurturing, and enriching care, and are a critical component of our state's infrastructure to support working parents and our economy.

In 2008, the Bath Area Family YMCA entered a partnership with RSU1 school district to provide public pre-K as a partner in the CHOICES program (Children Having Opportunities in Collaborative Early Settings). In the 15 years of this partnership, the Y has provided pre-K to 32 children each year. The coveted slots at the Bath Y fill up quickly through a lottery system, and our waitlist continues to grow each year.

The unique nature of our partnership allows us to provide a full day of high-quality care for the children in our program. Children attend pre-K in a designated classroom at the Y from 8:30 AM to 12 PM, and then we seamlessly integrate them into wraparound programming for the remainder of the day. Practically speaking, this means that families have care for their children from 7 AM to 5 PM, Monday through Friday in one safe, convenient location. We know this care is particularly essential for parents that are working full time and don't have the ability to end their workday early, or transport their children from pre-K to a separate aftercare program in the middle of the workday.

Our public pre-K program employs state certified teachers and provides children with learning opportunities that prepare them for kindergarten and beyond. Additionally, we provide all children with weekly swim lessons, music classes, yoga, gymnastics and more through the resources we have available as a community-centered facility.

As Maine expands public pre-K availability, we must continue to lift up the mixed delivery model as a critical component of supporting working families with young children.

I urge you to vote ought to pass on LD 1799.

Respectfully submitted,
Annie Colaluca, Preschool Director, Bath Area Family YMCA

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