



WAYPOINT

The Power of Community

Testimony In support of Part CC

LD 2214 An Act to Make Supplemental Appropriations and Allocations from the General Fund and Other Funds for the Expenditures of State Government and to Change Certain Provisions of the Law Necessary to the Proper Operations of State Government for the Fiscal Years Ending June 30, 2024 and June 30, 2025

**Joint Standing Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs
February 21, 2024**

Good afternoon, Senator Rotundo, Senator Rafferty, Representative Sachs, Representative Brennan and esteemed members of both the Appropriations and Financial Affairs and Education and Cultural Affairs Committees. Thank you for the opportunity to come before you today in support of Part CC of the Governor's supplemental budget to implement the CDS daily tuition for Special Purpose Preschools.

My name is Tiffany Haskell, I am a Special Education Director and School Psychologist, and I serve as Clinical Director for Waypoint (formerly Waban) in Sanford. For decades now, one of our primary services has been serving preschool aged children with disabilities at our special purpose preschool. Our special education staff and therapists have helped hundreds of children with autism and other disabilities to develop critical skills than enable them to lead healthy and productive lives and overcome significant learning and behavioral challenges.

I want to thank members of both committees for your leadership last session in working with providers and MDOE to provide the CDS "intermediate" or "bridge payments" for special purpose preschools for this school year while the Department finalizes the "daily tuition rates" for the upcoming 2024-2025 school year. While MDOE is currently working to develop the methodology to provide a daily tuition rate going forward for the children they refer to us; we have begun to receive our first bridge payments last month and appreciate this very much.

This is a game changer for Waypoint. We are now in the process of reopening a classroom that we had closed. Given MDOE's payments for these required educational services, we are preparing to increase our census and serve more children currently on CDS' waitlist in York County. When children with significant needs receive the intensive support they need, success stories abound. As an example, when "Jimmy" first entered the program at age 4, he was non-verbal, engaged in high rates of self-injurious head-banging behavior, and refused to participate in activities with other children. Given intensive supports, direct instruction and evidence-based interventions, Jimmy uses several words and his new device to communicate, rarely engages in self-injury to get his needs met, and routinely participates with other children in a variety of learning activities.

I offer my thanks to the Department and Governor Mills for prioritizing these funds in the budget so that the daily tuition rate can be implemented as promised for Special Purpose Preschools this year, in alignment with Maine's K-12 Special Purpose Private Schools who also serve children with the highest level of educational and medically necessary service needs.

Please support Part CC in the final budget. Thank you for your consideration.

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