

Testimony on **LD 345**, An Act Regarding Educational Policies and Programs from Dewey Meteer of Nobleboro, Maine.

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Senator Rafferty, Representative Brennan, and members of the Education and Cultural Affairs Committee, my name is Dewey Meteer. I was the CDS site Director in Waldo County from 1999-2010 and in Hancock County from 2005-2010. I spoke at the hearing in the year 2000 that Representative Brennan referenced on February 1, at which the Department first started tightening eligibility requirements in order to save money by serving fewer children. It is encouraging that Commissioner Makin now wishes to expand Part C eligibility.

Today I testify neither for nor against LD345. I will, however, make some observations and recommendations I hope you find useful.

First, on page 6 there is a statement that CDS staff members chairing IEP meetings “have to rely on second-hand accounts”, implying that this is one reason children served by CDS receive more services than they need, or would receive in public schools. This is bogus. In schools, Special Education Directors chair IEP meetings and they rely on second-hand accounts as well. The difference is that school-led IEP meetings take place in school buildings, with school personnel, and they all know the party line. They have pre-determined types and amounts of therapy for most of the children. Only the more complex cases are individualized.

Second, on pages 10-12 examples are given of how other states structure delivery of Part C and Part B services. The examples are promising, but what is missing is any indication of how well the systems are working for the children served. I hope you ask about that.

Third, yes, there is a shortage of providers for CDS, but there is a shortage of people everywhere, in teaching, bus driving, nursing, law enforcement, firefighting, etc.

Fourth, a flaw in the design of CDS is that there are many stakeholders benefitting from the system who are not children with disabilities. This creates resistance to change. “The egg must break before the bird can fly.” Lord Tennyson.

I have two recommendations:

1. As you devise a plan, include how success will be measured. A good management plan has performance standards, but none are included in DOE’s proposal. I recommend you include some in the plan, with features for accountability as legislatures and administrators change.
2. Include a provision that children placed by their parents in inclusive settings (child care or Head start) will receive services in that setting (as opposed to being taken to a school or a clinic).

A request. Please adopt the perspective of being partners with DOE in creating a better system. I have watched and listened to several iterations of the Education Committee seemingly play goalkeeper versus DOE’s proposals. This was true on February 1 when almost all of you asked questions only about money. Granted, you must do that, but also place those children not being served on equal footing with your fears for your towns and SAUs. If you don’t like the entire plan, pass the parts you can accept, but finally, MOVE FORWARD. If you don’t, figure out how to explain to the families of children with disabilities how once again the legislature has let them down.

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