



# WAYPOINT

The Power of Community

*LD 210 An Act Making Unified Appropriations and Allocations for the Expenditures of State Government, General Fund and Other Funds, and Changing Certain Provisions of the Law Necessary to the Proper Operations of State Government for the Fiscal Years Ending June 30, 2025, June 30, 2026 and June 30, 2027*

**Joint Standing Committees on Appropriation and Financial Affairs &  
Education and Cultural Affairs  
Testimony from Waypoint's Fraser Ford School in Sanford, ME  
February 7, 2025**

Good afternoon, Senator Rotondo, Senator Rafferty, Representative Gattine, Representative Murphy, and esteemed members of the Joint Standing Committees on Appropriations and Financial Affairs and Education and Cultural Affairs. Thank you for the opportunity to testify on LD 210, the Governor's Biennial Budget, *An Act Making Unified Appropriations and Allocations for the Expenditures of State Government, General Fund and Other Funds, and Changing Certain Provisions of the Law Necessary to the Proper Operations of State Government for the Fiscal Years Ending June 30, 2025, June 30, 2026 and June 30, 2027.*

My name is Tiffany Haskell, I am a Special Education Director and School Psychologist, and I serve as Clinical Director for Waypoint in Sanford. For decades now, one of our primary services has been serving preschool aged children with disabilities at our special purpose preschool (SPPK). Our special education staff and therapists have helped hundreds of children with autism and other disabilities to develop critical skills, overcome significant learning and behavioral challenges, and graduate into the less restrictive public school setting.

I want to thank members of the Appropriations and Education Committees for your leadership 2 years ago in working with providers and MDOE to provide the CDS "intermediate" or "bridge payments" for special purpose preschools. Indeed, following that intermediate period, the MDOE further acknowledged the need for parity with the K-12 SPPS (special purpose private school) tuition process by implementing virtually the same tuition process for SPPKs this school year. Developing and implementing PreK tuition was directed through the legislative process, with the vital support of the members of this very committee.

Providing us with payment for the educational services we provide has allowed us to open a classroom that was otherwise closed, hire additional staff, increase staff wages, and improve our ability to hire. Tuition also supports the operation of our school, the facility, materials, and necessary equipment. At this time, dozens of children on the York County CDS waitlist are still in need of SPPK services and placement.

We have operated in good faith with assurances from the MDOE that this funding would continue. And I believe the esteemed members of the Education Committee have as well.

This funding, which programs only just started receiving this fall, has helped stabilize this critical component of the IDEA (Individual with Disabilities Education Act) required continuum of special education services. Significantly, this is also NOT the time to destabilize any part of the continuum of services for our vulnerable 3–5-year-olds with special needs. CDS (Child Development Services) is in



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flux in every corner of the state with local public schools slowly taking on the FAPE (Free Appropriate Public Education) responsibility for preschool children with special needs.

In addition to CDS' continued waitlists for these children, SAUs (School Administrative Units) who have taken on preschool aged children are also placing students with the most significant needs in our SPPK.

SAU's have been paying tuition for placement in a K-12 SPPS for decades. The tuition process implemented this year by MDOE/CDS for PreK children who require this specialized setting is THE methodology that allows these children to access the specialized support they need as the PreK landscape makes its biggest transition in state history.

We ask that you please restore this essential funding in support of Maine's most vulnerable young children.

Respectfully,

Tiffany Haskell  
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