

Nicole Chan, Ellsworth Community School District, President
Jon Doty, RSU #34, President-Elect
Jennifer Nickerson, MSAD 22, Treasurer
Joanne Dowd, Kittery School District, Secretary
Debra McIntyre, Executive Director

Testimony of Debra McIntyre, Executive Director, on behalf of the members of the Maine Curriculum Leaders Association, testifying in opposition to LD 437 An Act Directing the Department of Education to Develop Pilot Programs to Place Child Care Facilities in Selected School Administrative Units.

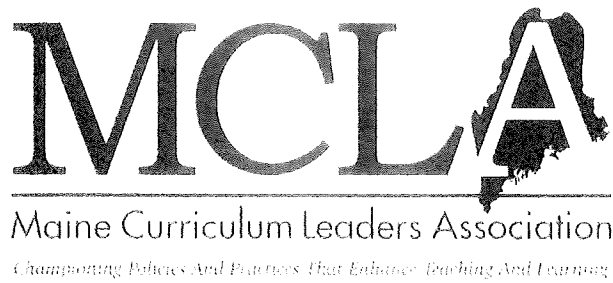
Senator Rafferty, Representative Murphy, and members of the Education and Cultural Affairs Committee, my name is Debra McIntyre, and I am the Executive Director of the Maine Curriculum Leaders Association. On behalf of the members of MCLA, I am testifying in opposition to LD 437 An Act Directing the Department of Education to Develop Pilot Programs to Place Child Care Facilities in Selected School Administrative Units.

While we acknowledge the value of early childhood education and the importance of accessible child care services, we believe that the proposal to place child care facilities within school administrative units would present significant challenges, particularly in light of the ongoing implementation of FAPE (Free Appropriate Public Education) for 3- and 4-year-old children.

One of the primary concerns we have is the strain this would place on already limited space, staffing, and resources in our schools. Currently, many districts are working hard to implement FAPE for 3- and 4-year-olds, which includes providing specialized early childhood services within our public schools. This process requires careful planning and considerable resources, including additional staff, training, and space to ensure that these young children receive the services they are entitled to.

Introducing child care facilities into schools could lead to overcrowding and a reduction in the quality of educational services. Schools are already facing challenges in managing space effectively as they attempt to meet the diverse needs of their students. Adding child care programs could further limit the availability of classrooms and specialized spaces needed to implement high-quality early childhood education and special education programs.

Furthermore, schools are struggling with staffing shortages across all grade levels, and the additional requirement to manage child care facilities could exacerbate these challenges. While we recognize the potential benefits of such programs, we feel that the proposal overlooks the



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logistical and operational hurdles that would arise, particularly in districts that are already at capacity.

At this time, we believe it is more prudent to focus on strengthening the early childhood programs that are already in place and addressing the critical issues of space, staffing, and resources that we are currently facing. The expansion of Pre-Kindergarten and providing FAPE services for 3- and 4-year-olds are both worthy endeavors but consume a great amount of resources. While we recognize that this bill is a pilot proposal, we are concerned that this will lead to other mandates for all school districts to implement. We believe that child care issues should be addressed at the community level and not place undue burdens on our schools.

In conclusion, while MCLA recognizes the importance of early childhood education and child care, we oppose LD 437. Given the current efforts to implement FAPE for 3- and 4-year-olds, as well as the challenges schools face with space, staffing, and resources, we believe this proposal would create additional hardships for school districts.

For these reasons MCLA encourages the committee to vote Ought Not to Pass. Thank you for your time.