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*Testimony of Rep. Kristen Cloutier presenting*  
**LD 1389, An Act to Create the Building Opportunity Through  
Out-of-School Time Program**  
*Before the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services*

Senator Ingwersen, Representative Meyer, and honorable members of the Committee on Health and Human Services, I am Representative Kristen Cloutier and I'm here today to present **LD 1389, An Act to Create the Building Opportunity Through Out-of-School Time Program**, which seeks to expand access to out-of-school-time programs for children in Maine.

The need for this funding is clear. Despite seventy percent of young children in Maine having all available parents or guardians working outside the home, there remain significant gaps in programming options for school-age children. Currently, for every one child enrolled in an afterschool program in Maine, five more are waiting for a spot. The demand far exceeds the available resources.

Out-of-school time programs provide essential benefits to working parents, children, and our economy. These programs support working parents by ensuring their children have reliable care after school, during school vacations, and over the summer. They also help children develop academically, socially, and emotionally. My own daughter participated in afterschool and summer programming at our local YWCA, where she was kept safe and engaged while my husband and I were at work. Research shows that out-of-school time programs improve learning outcomes and school attendance, while also playing a critical role in preventing risky behaviors and reducing juvenile crime. Children in out-of-school time programs move their bodies, enjoy nutritious meals and snacks, explore new interests, and build positive relationships with their peers and adult mentors. We still get excited when we see Ms. Melanie at the grocery store, and my daughter is 16 years old now!

This funding would support community-based organizations to expand and enhance school-age childcare programming, particularly for at-risk and underserved children. This could include creating new programs, expanding existing ones, or reducing barriers to participation.

Increased investment in out-of-school time programming is an investment in Maine's children, families, and future workforce. I urge you to support this bill and help ensure that every child who needs a safe and enriching afterschool environment has access to one.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I welcome any questions you may have.