

Senator Ingwersen, Representative Meyer, and distinguished members of the Health and Human Services Committee, my name is Abi Iverson. I am the Development Director for Coastal Kids Preschool in Damariscotta, ME.

I am here to testify in favor of LD 1469: An Act to Amend the Quality Rating System for Child Care Services in Maine.

Coastal Kids Preschool represents one of the few, at my last count ²⁶~~34~~ providers in Maine, to hold both an MRTQ Level 5 status and accreditation from the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). This rating allows our families to access the full benefit for the Child Care Affordability Program as well as a double tax credit on their Maine income tax return. We are the only program in Lincoln County to hold both MRTQ Level 5 Status and NAEYC accreditation, and it is my understanding that reaching Level 5 status requires accreditation. Expanding the definition of an accredited program will provide more families with access to these benefits, as well as recognize our local programs for the high-quality programming they are already delivering.

I would also suggest that the sponsors consider including Pre-k programs offered at NEASC-accredited private schools. With the continuing need for more pre-k programs, I know of private schools that are expanding to include Pre-k programming. Most of these schools either currently have or ultimately seek accreditation from the New England Association of Schools and Colleges.

Thank you for your time and consideration today.