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To the Members of the Health and Human Services committee,

My name is Camelia Babson-Haley, and I am the Executive Director of Youth and Family Outreach, a nationally accredited early care and education program that has proudly served Greater Portland for nearly 40 years. I write today in **strong support of LD 1469**, a bill to amend our state's Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS) to allow nationally accredited programs to automatically qualify for the highest rating level.

Our program has maintained national accreditation for over two decades, meeting rigorous standards across all domains of quality, including curriculum, environment, health and safety, family engagement, and staff-child interactions. For many years, our accreditation status aligned with the state's top quality rating, recognizing our consistent commitment to excellence.

However, under the current QRIS guidelines, we have been **demoted from a Level 5 to a Level 3** due to one specific criterion—teacher qualifications—that we do not fully meet according to state requirements. This single discrepancy disregards the breadth and depth of our high-quality practices, our long-standing accreditation, and our proven impact on the children and families we serve.

This downgrade has serious implications. Being rated at Level 3 now **disqualifies us from critical funding and resources**, which are essential to sustain our services—particularly as we serve a **vulnerable population** of families living in poverty, many of whom face complex barriers to stability and opportunity.

LD 1469 offers a sensible and fair solution. Recognizing national accreditation as sufficient to achieve the highest QRIS level honors the comprehensive evaluations programs like ours undergo and supports a diverse field of providers working to offer quality care under challenging circumstances.

Please support LD 1469 to ensure that nationally accredited programs are not penalized by inflexible standards that do not fully reflect program quality. Your vote in favor of this bill is a vote to sustain and strengthen the vital work we do for children and families every day.

Thank you for your time, your service, and your commitment to early childhood education.

Sincerely,

Camelia Babson-Haley  
Executive Director

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