



Maine Developmental Disabilities Council

May 1, 2025

Senator Rafferty, Representative Murphy, and Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs: please accept this testimony in SUPPORT of LD 1098 An Act to Ensure Equal Access to a Full School Day for All Students.

My name is Nancy Cronin, and I am the Executive Director of the Maine Developmental Disabilities Council¹. This year I have spoken to more families with children who are receiving abbreviated school days than I have heard in over 20 years of work. The reason for the abbreviated school day is rarely because of the child needing it. Instead, I regularly hear that there isn't staff or space to meet the students' needs so the child cannot come to school. One single Mom was told that her daughter could only come to school for 3 hours a day. She asked that if that were to occur for a short amount of time then the hours be 9-12. The school only offered 11-2 because that was when space was available. This single mom lost her job. She, her daughter with a disability, and her son struggled with food security and almost lost their apartment. The reality is that when schools are unable to fulfill their obligation, like they do for everyone else, there is a ripple effect through the family and employer. Because of this I fully support requiring approval from the parent. This family experienced this for over four months. This Mom should not have lost the ability to feed her family because of a schools inconvenience.

Can you imagine a second grade class within a district being denied an education because there wasn't a teacher or a specific classroom. It sounds ridiculous. Why is this different? The bottom line is that students with disabilities have a right to an education. Not having staff or space is not an acceptable excuse. The goal should always be to get a child back into school.

Please pass LD 1098.

Thank you for your time and attention.

Sincerely,

Nancy Cronin

Maine Developmental Disabilities Council.

¹ Councils on Developmental Disabilities were created through the Developmental Disabilities Assistance and Bill of Rights Act (DD Act) in 1970. Maine's DD Council has been advocating with and for individuals with developmental disabilities for over 50 years. The DD Council is a federally funded, independent organization with members from across the state, including persons with disabilities, family members, and representatives of public and private agencies which provide services and/or funding for services for individuals with developmental disabilities. As required in federal law, we are involved in advocacy, capacity building and systemic change activities, with the goal that individuals with developmental and other disabilities of all ages are fully included, integrated, and involved in their communities and the decisions impacting their lives.