



# Maine Developmental Disabilities Council

February 24, 2026

Testimony in Opposition of LD 2175 – Resolve, Regarding Legislative Review of Portions of Chapter 115: The Credentialing of Education Personnel, a Major Substantive Rule of the Department of Education, State Board of Education

Senator Rafferty, Representative Murphy, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs:

My name is Nancy Cronin, and I am the Executive Director of the Maine Developmental Disabilities Council (MDDC).<sup>1</sup> In addition, I am a mother of a 16 year old with ADHD and Dyslexia.

Imagine being a high school calculus teacher for over a decade. You are highly skilled at your job and proficient in capturing adolescents' imagination so they can understand the complex, ever-changing variables required for success in calculus. Then one day, you are told by an administrator that next year you will be teaching kindergarten.

While mathematics itself may not be your primary concern, the developmental shift certainly would be. The pedagogy, classroom management, communication style, and foundational developmental knowledge required to teach five-year-olds are entirely different from those required to teach adolescents.

Conversely, imagine a creative, highly effective kindergarten teacher—someone deeply skilled in building early literacy, fostering social-emotional growth, and supporting young children. It would be equally alarming to tell that educator they will now be teaching calculus.

This analogy illustrates my concern with the proposed changes in Chapter 115, Part 2. Page 31 replaces the current separate grade-span 282 endorsements—birth to age five, kindergarten through grade 8, and grades 7 through 12—with a single endorsement for special educators from birth through grade 12.

Under this proposal, a special educator skilled in adolescent development could at any time be assigned to work with a three-year-old in Pre-K. Developmentally, a three-year-old and a seventeen-year-old are profoundly different. Even an educator highly skilled in working with upper elementary students would not automatically possess the specialized training required for early childhood special education. Cognitive capacity, emotional regulation, communication development, and neurodevelopmental trajectories vary dramatically across these age spans. Effective instruction and intervention are grounded in a deep, developmentally specific knowledge base. Diluting these distinctions risks undermining the quality and appropriateness of services delivered to children at critical stages of development.

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<sup>1</sup> 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 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.

Special education is not interchangeable across age spans. It requires specialized knowledge tailored to specific developmental periods.

I understand that the intent of this proposal is to build capacity and expand the pool of special educators. I appreciate the urgency of staffing shortages. However, expanding credentials by broadening scope is not the same as building capacity through preparation.

Our state also needs more surgeons and family practitioners. But we would not solve that workforce challenge by allowing family practitioners to perform intricate heart surgery without the requisite specialized training. Capacity cannot come at the expense of appropriate expertise.

Similarly, the proposed changes to the renewal 282 endorsements—particularly the revision to Section 2.1.6 allowing renewal across the birth-to-grade-12 span—should not be adopted. Renewal requirements exist to ensure that educators maintain current, developmentally appropriate knowledge and skills. Removing grade-span specificity weakens that safeguard.

Teachers working in birth-to-age-five settings possess specialized knowledge of early brain development, early language acquisition, and early intervention strategies. Secondary educators are trained in adolescent development, executive functioning growth, and broader formal operative thinking.

This structure makes sense. It aligns training with developmental science. It protects students. It supports educators.

We want educators to remain in the profession. Returning to the earlier analogy: why would a calculus teacher remain in education if they could be reassigned to kindergarten at any time? The same concern applies to special educators. They are specialists. They invest time and professional identity in mastering a developmental span.

This proposed change undermines that specialization and risks diminishing both instructional quality and educator retention. For these reasons, I respectfully urge you not to eliminate grade-span credentials or alter renewal requirements in ways that remove developmental specificity. Our students—especially those with disabilities—deserve educators who are deeply prepared for the particular stage of development they serve.

Thank you for your consideration.



Nancy Cronin, MA  
Executive Director