



Testimony of Betsy Mahoney, Esq in favor of LD 350, An Act To Increase the Number of Courses Regarding Autism Spectrum Disorder That Count toward Special Education Certification

Senator Rafferty, Representative Brennan and members of the Health and Human Services Committee, my name is Betsy Mahoney and I am the Community Outreach Liaison for the Autism Society of Maine. I am also the mother of a 29-year-old son with autism and intellectual disabilities who received his education in a Maine School Administrative Unit.

I am here to testify in support of LD 350, An Act To Increase the Number of Courses Regarding Autism Spectrum Disorder That Count toward Special Education Certification. Currently, under Requirements for Teachers of Students with Disabilities for Special Education, the Department of Education will accept one autism course and one applied behavioral analysis course. As many of you know, applied behavioral analysis is a type of therapy that is sometimes used with people with autism. It focuses on improving specific behaviors such as social skills, communication, reading and academics.

The current regulations for certifying special education teachers are few and far between, perhaps in response to the shortage of special education teachers. A move to make it a bit easier for teachers to be certified for special ed by allowing three autism courses to count towards certification instead of the current one or two courses is a move in the right direction.

I would add that the special ed teacher certification process comprises a very complex and confusing set of regulations, so this and any future efforts to clarify the process would be most welcome.