

# DISABILITY RIGHTS MAINE

February 9, 2022

Senator Joseph Rafferty, Chair  
Representative Michael Brennan, Chair  
Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs  
Clerk Elias Murphy Cross Office Building, Room 208  
Augusta, Maine 04333

Re: L.D. 1632 An Act To Update the Laws Regarding the Maine  
Educational Center for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing and the Governor  
Baxter School for the Deaf

Dear Senator Rafferty, Representative Brennan, and Members of the Joint Standing  
Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs:

Thank you for the opportunity for Disability Rights Maine (DRM) to provide  
testimony in support of this legislation. DRM's mission is to ensure autonomy,  
inclusion, equality and access for people with disabilities in Maine.

I am the program director for DRM's Deaf Services. I work every day on behalf of  
individuals who are Deaf, Hard of Hearing and Late-Deafened. I myself am Deaf and  
a former student of the Governor Baxter School for the Deaf.

LD 1632 makes necessary updates to Chapter 304, the rules which govern the Maine  
Educational Center for the Deaf & Hard of Hearing (MECDHH) and the Governor  
Baxter School for the Deaf (GBSD). This bill would ensure that appropriate services  
are provided statewide for Deaf and Hard of Hearing children through  
MECDHH/GBSD, and clarifies funding responsibilities for those services.

In particular, we support the move to embed MECDHH/GBSD into early  
intervention and education plans for children. This is an important change. We  
believe it will positively impact the education of Deaf and Hard of Hearing children in  
Maine.

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MAINE'S PROTECTION AND ADVOCACY AGENCY FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

DRM urges the Committee to vote Ought to Pass on L.D. 1632.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Michelle Ames". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "M" and a long, sweeping underline.

Michelle Ames  
Deaf Services Program Director  
Disability Rights Maine