

Margaret Cole
Durham
LD 1632

Dear Maine Legislature,

My name is Margaret Cole and I live in the town of Durham. I am heartily in support of LD 1632. I am a parent of a deaf/hard of hearing child that currently receives services from The Maine Educational Center for the Deaf or Hard of Hearing. Our son is in 1st Grade at MECDHH's programme, housed at East End Community School in Portland. Our son's only language is ASL, and he receives all of his instruction in ASL. The staff there are doing a wonderful job, but with some extra funding in the correct areas of need, he and his school mates could all be doing so much better. I, as well as many other parents of deaf/hard of hearing children feel that it is time to revise the rules that govern MECDHH/GBSD and ensure that all children and all families no matter where they live in Maine, receive the support they need.

Some of the most important features of the new proposed guidelines that would benefit our family include, but are not limited to:

- Establishing statewide services for all deaf or hard of hearing children regardless of where they live or how they communicate
- Adding in specialty providers such as Teachers of the Deaf and SLPs - listening and spoken language, cued speech, ASL Specialists—there is a serious shortage of these types of professionals, currently
- Offering housing for HS students that live too far from a site based program (which is something that we might very well need once our son reaches that age)
- Continuing to provide preschool programming, social emotional programming and family activities on Mackworth Island, the home of the deaf community in Maine——in hopes that more funding will allow MECDHH to even expand family activities and ASL education to parents and siblings of deaf/hard of hearing children!

I hope that you will carefully consider these additions/modifications to current legislation for this very needy and worthy group of children in our state. Adding these proposals to Maine's current guidelines will open up a whole new world for deaf/ HH children and their families.....because deaf/HH children have so much to say.....and deserve to be heard!!!!!!

Sincerely,
Margaret Cole, DHom and mother of a deaf/HH Maine child