



## THE MAINE EDUCATIONAL CENTER FOR THE DEAF AND HARD OF HEARING

GOVERNOR BAXTER SCHOOL FOR THE DEAF

One Mackworth Island, Falmouth, ME 04105  
www.mecdhh.org

Karen Hopkins  
Executive Director

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Good Morning Senator Rafferty, Representative Brennan and esteemed members of the Education and Cultural Affairs Committee, My name is Karen Hopkins, and I am the very proud Executive Director of The Maine Educational Center for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing and The Governor Baxter School for the Deaf. I am speaking to you today on behalf of the 922 deaf and hard of hearing infants, toddlers, and school age children that live throughout our beautiful state.

I have had the honor of working with Deaf and hard of hearing children and their families in Maine for over 25 years. We have seen many changes in our organization and watched it evolve from a school on Mackworth Island to a statewide educational agency serving children in every corner of Maine from birth to age 22. While we have made changes based on feedback from Maine's Department of Education, school districts, the Deaf community, and most importantly the families of deaf and hard of hearing children, the current law that governs our work does not reflect the changes we have made and the work we know we need to do.

Over the past year, we have held stakeholder meetings and collected feedback from families and professionals throughout Maine. The changes proposed in this legislation are the voice of your constituents and are needed to appropriately meet the needs of deaf and hard of hearing children statewide.

I would like to highlight some of the important additions and revisions of this legislation:

In addition to continuing to provide all services in the current Chapter 304, LD 1632:

1. Adds early intervention services for deaf and hard of hearing children
2. Gives the district where the student resides responsibility for FAPE, including placement decisions with the child's IEP team.
3. Clarifies service delivery responsibility of MECDDHH and school administrative districts
4. Clarifies financial responsibility of MECDDHH and school administrative districts
5. Ensures MECDDHH providers are official IFSP, IEP and 504 team members, bringing deaf education expertise to every child in the state
6. Adds additional services that offer specialization based on the families' choice of language
7. Adds coordination of hearing assistive technology and interpreting services statewide for school districts
8. Allows for the expansion of services such as social-emotional programming, outreach services and additional site-based programs throughout the state based on student need

I am incredibly proud of our work and the support we give to children, families, educators and professionals statewide. We recently completed a new strategic plan for our organization which will guide our work for the next three years. The need for the revision in Chapter 304 is evident and the family stories of your Maine constituents are authentic. We can make a real difference by



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Karen Hopkins, M. Ed., CAS  
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