

Elizabeth Cameron
Cape Elizabeth, ME
LD 1309

Testimony of Elizabeth Cameron, Psy.D., ABPP, Licensed Psychologist
In Support of LD 1309

An Act to Clarify Requirements for Payment of Tuition for Children with Disabilities
by the Department of Education's Child Development Services System
Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs
April 13, 2023

Good afternoon, Senator Rafferty, Representative Brennan, and members of the Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs. My name is Elizabeth Cameron and I work as a psychologist for the Margaret Murphy Centers for Children. I want to thank you for the opportunity to offer testimony in support of LD 1309. I have worked with young children with disabilities for more than twenty years, and also work with elementary, middle, and young adults as well; some of whom were not able to benefit from high-quality early intervention supports and services. The research is more than clear that when early, high-quality, intervention services are provided in the first five years of life there is a ripple effect benefit that extends beyond the children themselves to their families and home communities. Among the benefits incurred is a significant cost savings. The return on investment for high-quality early intervention not only makes intuitive sense but is irrefutably documented and yet year after year, in the State of Maine, providers have been asked to do more with less for our youngest learners. The lack of CDS tuition for children with disabilities has resulted in high-quality service providers having to make the difficult decision to decrease preschool service censuses. This, while necessary to remain viable for the other students we serve, has resulted not only in longer waitlists but also in some programs ultimately closing altogether which only further decreases the opportunities for high-quality early intervention efforts that could make meaningful changes in the lives of so many during those crucial first five years of life. This is unacceptable and it doesn't have to be this way. Therefore, I want to thank Representative Gattine for bringing this bill forward and for the committee co-sponsors and other legislators who have spoken in support of developing an equitable payment for the critical educational services that special purpose preschools provide to hundreds of Maine's most vulnerable children each year.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.

Respectfully Submitted,
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