



Maine Administrators of Services for Children with Disabilities

## **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**

Senator Rafferty, Representative Brennan, and Distinguished Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs, my name is Gay Anne McDonald and I am the Executive Director for the Maine Administrators of Services for Children with Disabilities (MADSEC).

On behalf of MADSEC, I am providing testimony 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

LD 1309 seeks to right an apparent inequity between Preschool Special Purpose Private Schools (SPPS) and K-12 SPPS who provide specialized educational and therapeutic programming for children with disabilities. Whereas, K-12 SPPS receive a daily tuition rate for education services from each student's sending school district, in addition to MaineCare reimbursement for medically necessary services to eligible children, Preschool SPPS only receive MaineCare reimbursement for eligible children for medically necessary services.

The lack of funding for educational programming to Preschool SPPS is causing a reduction in the number of children they can accept into their program or the closing of their doors completely. As a result, Maine children with the most significant disabilities are not receiving the needed early intervention services at their most critical time of development. Research clearly indicates early intervention yields higher results, and that early intervening services are key to the future development and success of children as they prepare for kindergarten and beyond. Our K-12 system is already seeing the negative impact from the lack of early intervention which is causing an additional strain on an already strained educational system, and most importantly a disadvantage to our young children with disabilities and added stress to their families.

We understand that the funding formula is not a simple shift from the K-12 system to the Preschool system, however strongly encourage and believe the Department will work with the Committee and bill sponsor to rectify the lack of funding for educational services to Preschool SPPS so that our most vulnerable children can receive the early intervening special education services they deserve, and have a legal right to, at their most critical time of need.

Thank you for your time, consideration, and service to our state.

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