



maineaeyc

Maine Association for the
Education of Young Children

Testimony of Heather Marden
On behalf of the Maine Association for the Education of Young Children

In support of LD 2120 An Act to Fund the Delivery of Educational Services to Children with Special Needs
as Required by State and Federal Law in Special Purpose Private Preschools
1/31/24

Senator Rafferty, Representative Brennan and distinguished members of the Education and Cultural Affairs Committee, my name is Heather Marden, Co-Executive Director of the Maine Association for the Education of Young Children (MaineAEYC).

MaineAEYC promotes high-quality early learning for each and every child, birth through age 8, by connecting practice, policy, and research. We advance a diverse, dynamic early childhood profession and support all who care for, educate, and work on behalf of young children.

Access to early care and educational settings is in crisis mode across the state. The crisis runs even deeper for children with IEPs needing to access special education services. As a state, we should be doing everything possible to ensure young children are getting access to the services they need during the most critical years of development. If these services are delayed, we are going against everything we know through research and practice that early intervention leads to more successful outcomes.

We must fund educational reimbursement to ALL programs serving these children so that they may operate at maximum capacity, reduce and eliminate waitlists for children and families accessing services, and improve outcomes for children. In no circumstance should we be shortchanging these programs for the vital services they provide.

Waitlists are long, children are being harmed by the delay in services and we have to fully invest in this system and the services provided by those contracts holding up services.

Please support LD 2120.