



**Alliance for Addiction and Mental Health Services, Maine**  
*The unified voice for Maine's community behavioral health providers*

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**Testimony 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**

**Sponsored by Representative Gattine**

**January 31, 2024**

Good afternoon Senator Rafferty, Representative Brennan, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs. I am Malory Shaughnessy, a resident of Westbrook, and the Executive Director of the Alliance for Addiction and Mental Health Services. The Alliance is the statewide association representing the majority of Maine's community based mental health and substance use treatment providers. The Alliance advocates for the implementation of sound policies and evidence-based practices that serve to enhance the quality and effectiveness of our behavioral health care system.

On behalf of the Alliance, I am here today to speak in support of LD 2120, "An Act to Provide Incentives to Schools That Contract for Certain Social Work and Family Therapy Services." We want to thank Representative Gattine and his co-sponsors for bringing the bill forward, as well as the entire committee for taking the first step last year to establish an equitable and sustainable payment for the critical educational services that special purpose preschools provide to hundreds of Maine's most vulnerable children each year.

LD 2120 will ensure that we do not lose this momentum from last year's legislative changes, and assure that the interim payment will continue into the next school year, or until such time that the daily rate is fully developed and implemented.

As mentioned in the Governor's state of the state address just yesterday, we know that Maine is out of compliance with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act and hundreds of families and children are already on waitlists for specialized early education services, we cannot afford to lose well established and well-respected programs and hundreds of spots that could positively impact the current lives for these children and their families, as well as the future for children with disabilities.

On a personal note, my now 35-year-old son who has a PhD and is an Assistant Professor of Integrative Physiology, needed the services of a special purpose preschool when he was very young and in need of early interventions. The support and services he received were invaluable in keeping him on track to meet milestones, and once he had corrective surgeries, helped him catch up with his peers without struggling with delays. As a parent of this child, the support I received helped me learn about his strengths and needs and let my husband and I be better parents to him.

I also spent several years working for Woodfords in the Special Purpose Preschool and could tell you many stories of young children that came through the program and the amazing growth and change I was able to observe first hand.

For all these reasons, the Alliance asks you to support LD 2120. Thank you.