

*Senator Claxton, Representative Meyer, and honorable members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services: my name is Deka Adaweh, I am a resident of Lewiston and I am here today to testify in favor of LD 296.*

*I came to the USA in Feb 2015, from Djibouti seeking a better life and future for myself and my children. My first challenge was the weather of Maine which caused even more challenges to the caregiving I had to provide to Asia who was six years old who needed more care and attention.*

Asia was diagnosed with intellectual delay, I stayed up for her day and night, sleeping only 3 to 4 hours a day and trained her to be able to go to the bathroom when she needed to. It took me six months to see a gradual improvement with my schedule. For more than a year, as a single parent I did not receive any resources or support from any.

After a year and half in the US, alone with three children, not knowing enough english to navigate or understand the available resources. I used to walk her to Longley for those three months before Longley School transferred her to Farewell Elementary school for special education purposes.

It was impossible for me to leave her home even with a childcare provider, I had to be there for her all the time. Asia is a sweet child that fills my heart with love and joy. She is an angel for the family and brings so much life. I still spend a lot of time with her and follow her progress and evolution with care and I enjoy it.

This bill will be a support system for parents with special needs children that the state is there to acknowledge the time and effort we put into raising these children.