

May 10, 2023

Senator Baldacci, Representative Meyer and members of the committee on Health and Human Services, I'm writing in support of **LD 545**, An Act to Establish a Cabinet-level Position to Ensure a Continuum of Care to Support Children and Their Families, and/or **LD 1754**, Resolve, to Establish the Commission to Study the Delivery of Services to Children and Families.

My name is Tiffany Haskell, and I've worked with children and their families for 30 years in Maine across a variety of community and school-based services. I serve as the Clinical Director for Waypoint, formerly known as Waban, in Sanford, Maine. We provide comprehensive services to children and adults with intellectual disabilities, autism, and other developmental disabilities.

Each of these bills calls for a study of the system of care for young children, and the development of a Cabinet level position or new state department to oversee the reorganization of state services for children and their families. While LD 545 has identified birth to 3 years of age as the target, LD 1754 does not identify an age range for this work. Where LD 1754 requires a report-back to the Legislature in December 2023, LD 545 does not include a timeline. Taken together, these bills help highlight the need for comprehensive analysis of the current services in place, barriers to accessing those services, and opportunities to streamline access, maximize funding and improve outcomes for children.

I write in support of characterizing the current system as fractured and confusing for families of children with special needs and special health care needs. DHHS' Office of Child and Family Services and the Department of Education's Child Development Services each have responsibilities to our population of young children yet operate in perceived silos from the family point of view. This critical work is overdue.

Respectfully submitted,

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