



Senator Claxton  
Representative Meyer  
Members of the Committee of Health and Human Services

RE: LD 1712 An Act to Support Children's Healthy Development and School Success

Senator Claxton, Representative Meyer and members of the Health and Human Services Committee. My name is Carrie Woodcock I am the parent of two children with special needs and the Executive Director for Maine Parent Federation (MPF), the federally funded Parent Training and Information Center (PTI), Family to Family Health Information Center (F2F) and Statewide Family Network. We assist families of children with disabilities and special healthcare needs to navigate all systems of care. I am submitting this testimony in support of LD 1712 An Act to Support Children's Healthy Development and School Success.

For families of children with special healthcare needs and disabilities the network of systems of care which need to be navigated are confusing, time consuming, and completely overwhelming. When a family first receives a diagnosis most times even the professional providing the diagnosis is not informed about what's available and the process to retain services. This leaves families completely on their own to not only deal with the grief of what can be a devastating diagnosis but also to get in place the necessary interventions for their child. Too often I hear from families that they wish the new about our agency years prior to getting connected. Parents become the care coordinators for a system they know nothing about.

I know this because I have a 14-year-old daughter with Down Syndrome and I have personally navigated all the systems of care on my own. It has taken me the better part of those 14 years to learn the system and I am still learning every day. It is also a full-time job in order to ensure that she has every available resource.

There is no doubt that providing early intervention increases positive outcomes for all children with special health care needs and disabilities. Help Me Grow is designed to provide an initial entry point into all systems of care when a diagnosis is made. Families will be able to speak to an individual who has been trained specifically on the available early interventions systems in our state. In addition, Help Me Grow will have the ability to provide warm handoffs to the necessary agencies and support to improve the ability for families to get connected. Finally, Help Me Grow will also have the ability to follow-up with the family to ensure they were able to get connected and see if they need additional assistance. When families become connected, services become more available, and outcomes improve.

The implementation of Help Me Grow will be the beginning of true Care Coordination for families of children with special health care needs and disabilities in our state. I can unequivocally say that when

speaking to families the number one need they have is for real Care Coordination. Help Me Grow will be a real step to getting families connected and as a parent I can not understate the importance for my daughter of those connections.

It is for these reasons that I urge to support LD#1712.

Thank you for your consideration.

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