

May 8, 2023

Testimony re: LD 1769: “An Act Concerning Students Who Experience Educational Disruption due to Temporary or Permanent Changes Where They Live” – OUGHT TO PASS

Senator Rafferty, Representative Brennan, and distinguished members of the Education and Cultural Affairs Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide these comments in support of LD 1769. My name is Chris McLaughlin, and I am a licensed clinical social worker with over 22 years of experience providing behavioral health services to children and families across a variety of treatment settings here in Maine. I am also humbled to be the Executive Director of the Maine Chapter of the National Association of Social Workers (NASW-ME). A large part of my job at NASW-ME is to represent the interests of Maine’s social workers as they endeavor to meet the behavioral health needs of Maine people across all settings and ages from Fort Kent to York and all places in between. On behalf of our over 1000 members here in Maine, I’m honored to share thoughts on this important proposed legislation.

I am in favor of LD 1769: An Act Concerning Students Who Experience Educational Disruption due to Temporary or Permanent Changes Where They Live. The Keeping Maine’s Children Connected (KMCC) Liaison Network was instrumental in supporting students who experienced educational disruption due to in-patient psychiatric placement, foster care placement, kinship care placement, correctional-facility placement and/or high mobility because of economic instability.

I personally saw the benefit of the program as the Day Treatment Services Coordinator for a public school system in central Maine and then as the Associate VP of Pediatric and Community Care Services at Northern Light Acadia Hospital. The Keeping Maine’s Children Liaison network meant there was a single point of contact. As a school clinician, I was able to use the Keeping Maine’s Children Connected Liaison network to connect with school districts across the state, which was critical when a student moved from southern Maine. As the KMCC Liaison for the hospital, the liaison network enabled hospital staff to connect with key school staff who could support students as they transitioned from an in-patient psychiatric hospital stay. It meant students were better supported when they returned to their school and community.

The KMCC Liaison network and training promotes active dialogue and collaboration. Youth in transition are often involved with multiple systems, yet the individual Departments, school districts, and agencies too frequently work in isolation. The Keeping Maine’s Children Connected network didn’t create more work, it saved time. It resulted in staff from schools, agencies, and hospitals being more effective and efficient in accessing support for youth and their families.

For these reasons, I strongly encourage you to support this bill, LD 1769 An Act Concerning Students Who Experience Educational Disruption due to Temporary or Permanent Changes Where They Live. I want to thank you all for your work on this issue. Please do not hesitate to reach out to NASW ME for any support we can offer, including any social work representation and participation in any future work sessions for LD 1769.

Thank you again,



Chris McLaughlin, MSW, LCSW
Executive Director
Maine Chapter – NASW