



**Testimony of Victoria Weeks Rogers, MD
The Barbara Bush Children's Hospital at Maine Medical Center and *Let's Go!***

**In Support of LD 999 –
An Act to Provide a Healthy Learning Environment in Early Care Settings by Requiring Rules
Concerning Nutrition and Physical Activity**

April 14th, 2017

Good Morning Senator Brakey, Representative Hymanson and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services. My name is Victoria Rogers – I am a Pediatrician at The Barbara Bush Children's Hospital at Maine Medical Center and the Medical Director of the 5210 Let's Go! Program. Additionally, I am the Associate Director of the American Academy of Pediatrics Institute for Healthy Childhood Weight – where I help develop national recommendations on healthy eating and physical activity.

I am here on behalf of Let's Go! to testify in strong support of LD 999 – An Act to Provide a Healthy Learning Environment in Early Care Settings by Requiring Rules Concerning Nutrition and Physical Activity. Let's Go! is a community-based childhood obesity prevention program that has been working in Maine for over 10 years. We focus on increasing healthy eating and active living where children and their families live, learn, work and play. Currently we are working with over 232 licensed child cares in Maine – so we know a thing or two about childcare sites. Let's Go! provides tools, resources and training to child care providers to help them create environments to support these healthy behaviors. And for those sites, it's working – we have seen:

- **An improvement in child care environments - there are more healthy snacks and celebrations, more outdoor physical activity, less sedentary time.**
- **Kids are drinking less sugary drinks, watching less screen time and eating more fruits and veggies.**

Even with all of the success we have had with our engaged child care sites, obesity rates continue to be a health issue for our youngest children. According to the latest "The State of Obesity in Maine", a 2015 report funded by the Trust for America's Health and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, over 15% of youth ages 2-4 are considered obese. We also know that obesity in our youth often trends in to adulthood. Ensuring the health of our youth is then a key factor in ensuring a healthy and productive community and state.

LD 999 will help to ensure licensed child care facilities and family child care providers incorporate physical activity, healthy foods and beverages, and limited recreational screen time into their daily activities to in turn develop healthy, happy young children.

The research tells us this is critically important for numerous reasons:

Active kids tend to be healthy kids and healthy kids are better learners:

Regular physical activity reduces feelings of anxiety, stress and depression, and increases self-esteem. (1, 2)

- National recommendations for physical activity call for children and adolescents to get 60 minutes (1 hour) or more of physical activity each day.
- Additionally, the national American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) recommends 60 minutes of activity a day and the AAP even recommends that as docs we even prescribe it!

Access to healthy foods and beverages during the day leads to healthier kids and sets them up for a healthier life:

- **Childcare meals can be the main source of nutrition for many young children.** Participation in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) means that those sites are providing meals and snacks that meet specific USDA standards and meal patterns to include adequate nutrients children need for proper growth and development.
- According to research, **food insecurity in children is associated with behavior problems, disrupted social interactions, compromised school performance, poor dietary intake, lower physical activity, and altered daily activities.** (3)
- **Snacks are a bigger part of kids' diets than in the past.** More snacking and unhealthy snack foods (e.g., potato chips, cookies, and candy) are major factors linked with childhood obesity. When the foods are healthier, snacking can be linked to reduced obesity.

The research is solid: healthy kids learn better.

At Let's Go! we also realize that childcare providers are really busy – they care for our children from sun up to sundown and then sometimes even later. I do think LD999 will help them raise our children in an environment where healthy foods are plentiful and physical activity is a routine part of the day with screen time being less and less of the regular day.

So in summary, I, and Let's Go!, strongly support LD 999 – this bill will allow more children who spend time at child cares to eat healthy food and get their bodies moving every day – making them ready to learn and become healthy children, adolescents and eventually adults!

Thank you for your time.

For more information, please contact Victoria W. Rogers, MD by phone, at 207-662-2410, or by email, at rogerv@mmc.org

References:

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