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November 9, 2023

The Honorable Pender Makin
Commissioner of Education
Maine Department of Education
23 State House Station
Augusta, ME 04333-0023

Dear Commissioner Makin:

I am writing to share with you that a majority of the workers employed at Child Development Services, a state-funded, statewide agency under the direction of the Maine Department of Education, have taken a vote of no confidence in the agency's director, Roberta Lucas. The vote was 96% no-confidence in Roberta Lucas. The workers took the vote after concluding Roberta Lucas is undermining the agency and its services in order to achieve her goal of dissolving Child Development Services and pushing its state-mandated services onto Maine's public school districts – a public policy action that state legislators have been asked, but declined, to take.

The workers took the vote of no confidence in Roberta Lucas over a three-week period ending October 27, 2023. They cited a range of problems at CDS: a toxic work environment, high staff turnover, impossible caseloads, lack of trust, apparent nepotism in hiring and personnel decisions, and the director's support for dissolving the agency and pushing its state-mandated services onto Maine's public schools.

The toxic work environment that Roberta Lucas has created has hurt morale and driven many CDS workers out of the agency, exacerbating the long wait times for services. Twenty-nine workers have quit since June 1st. While 28 workers have been hired since then, about 70 positions at the agency remain vacant – a vacancy rate of approximately 20%.

The workers at CDS believe three actions are necessary to put CDS services back on track:

- 1) Replace Roberta Lucas with a CDS director who is committed to the agency's success;
- 2) Create a hiring committee that has CDS workers and family representation on it as part of any search for a new CDS director; and
- 3) Treat CDS like any other educational institution by establishing an oversight board.

Even though CDS is an agency under the oversight of the Maine Department of Education, no one in the Maine Department of Education appears to be providing any actual oversight of the agency. We represent the workers at CDS. We have repeatedly tried to communicate with the Maine Department of Education's program manager for CDS and have continually been denied an audience. We, therefore, are asking you to take immediate action to address the concerns of the CDS workers and their recommended course of action for CDS. Thank you for your time and consideration; I look forward to receiving a response.

Sincerely,

Dean Staffieri, President