



# 132nd MAINE LEGISLATURE

## FIRST SPECIAL SESSION-2025

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Legislative Document

No. 1955

S.P. 763

In Senate, May 7, 2025

### **An Act to Increase Child Care Affordability and Early Childhood Educator Stability**

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Reference to the Committee on Health and Human Services suggested and ordered printed.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'D M Grant'.

DAREK M. GRANT  
Secretary of the Senate

Presented by President DAUGHTRY of Cumberland.  
Cosponsored by Speaker FECTEAU of Biddeford and  
Senators: BEEBE-CENTER of Knox, BENNETT of Oxford, INGWERSEN of York, MOORE  
of Washington, Representatives: DAIGLE of Fort Kent, DEBRITO of Waterville, HASENFUS  
of Readfield, MEYER of Eliot.

1 **Be it enacted by the People of the State of Maine as follows:**

2 **Sec. 1. 22 MRSA §3731-B** is enacted to read:

3 **§3731-B. Maine Child Care Affordability Program Child Care Award**

4 The Maine Child Care Affordability Program Child Care Award, referred to in this  
5 section as "the award," is established in the department to provide funding to support child  
6 care services for eligible child care providers and early childhood educators who require  
7 child care services for their own children. A child care provider or early childhood educator  
8 who is eligible for the Maine Child Care Affordability Program established in section  
9 3731-A is eligible for the award subject to the following requirements.

10 **1. Licensing requirements; employees.** A child care provider or early childhood  
11 educator receiving the award must be employed in a child care facility licensed under  
12 section 8301-A, subsection 2 or by a family child care provider licensed under section  
13 8301-A, subsection 3.

14 **2. Licensing requirements; children.** A child of a child care provider or early  
15 childhood educator who is receiving the award must receive child care services in a child  
16 care facility licensed under section 8301-A, subsection 2 or from a family child care  
17 provider licensed under section 8301-A, subsection 3.

18 **3. Quality requirements; employees.** A child care provider or early childhood  
19 educator receiving the award must be employed in a child care facility licensed under  
20 section 8301-A, subsection 2 or from a family child care provider licensed under section  
21 8301-A, subsection 3 that meets quality requirements as determined in department rules.

22 **4. Quality requirements; children.** A child of a child care provider or early childhood  
23 educator receiving the award must receive child care services in a child care facility  
24 licensed under section 8301-A, subsection 2 or from a family child care provider licensed  
25 under section 8301-A, subsection 3 that meets quality requirements as determined in  
26 department rules.

27 The department shall provide the award directly to the child care facility or family child  
28 care provider who provides the child care services.

29 The department shall adopt rules to implement this section. The rules may include  
30 limitations of award amounts, waiting list requirements if sufficient funding is not  
31 available, quality requirements, qualifications of employees receiving the award,  
32 requirements of the child care facility or family child care provider at which the provider  
33 is employed and limitations on the number of children on behalf of whom an award may  
34 be received. Rules adopted pursuant to this paragraph are routine technical rules as defined  
35 in Title 5, chapter 375, subchapter 2-A.

36 **Sec. 2. 22 MRSA §3737-A**, as enacted by PL 2021, c. 635, Pt. RR, §1, is repealed.

37 **Sec. 3. 22 MRSA §3737-B** is enacted to read:

38 **§3737-B. Salary Sustainability Program for Child Care Professionals**

39 **1. Program established.** The Salary Sustainability Program for Child Care  
40 Professionals, referred to in this section as "the program," is established in the department  
41 to support child care professionals who provide services to children in a child care facility  
42 licensed under section 8301-A, subsection 2 or under a family child care provider licensed

1 under section 8301-A, subsection 3 by providing salary supplements based on education  
2 and experience. Any salary supplement provided by the department under the program to  
3 a child care facility or family child care provider must be paid by that child care facility or  
4 family child care provider in order to increase wages for any child care provider or early  
5 childhood educator who provides services to children.

6 **2. Report.** Beginning on January 2, 2026, and annually thereafter, the department  
7 shall submit a report to the joint standing committee of the Legislature having jurisdiction  
8 over health and human services matters regarding the number of child care professionals  
9 participating in the program, expenditures under the program and progress in implementing  
10 the tiered system required under subsection 4.

11 **3. Five-year assessment.** Every 5 years, beginning in 2030, the department shall  
12 include in the annual report required in subsection 2, an assessment of the impact of the  
13 program and any changes necessary to ensure the program's continued effectiveness. The  
14 joint standing committee of the Legislature having jurisdiction over health and human  
15 services matters may report out legislation related to the 5-year assessment in any regular  
16 or special session of the Legislature in the year in which the 5-year assessment is included  
17 in the annual report.

18 **4. Rules; tiered system.** The department shall establish by rule and implement a tiered  
19 system for salary supplements under this section. The rules must provide, at a minimum,  
20 3 tiers based on the education and experience levels of child care providers and early  
21 childhood educators. The 2nd tier must provide a salary supplement that is at least 50%  
22 greater than the first tier and the 3rd tier must provide a salary supplement that is at least  
23 50% greater than the 2nd tier. Rules adopted pursuant to this subsection are routine  
24 technical rules as defined in Title 5, chapter 375, subchapter 2-A.

25 **Sec. 4. 22 MRSA §3737-C** is enacted to read:

26 **§3737-C. Program providing child care provider scholarships and apprenticeships**

27 The department shall develop and implement a program that provides scholarship and  
28 apprenticeship opportunities to child care providers and early childhood educators pursuing  
29 degrees or certifications related to their employment. The department may contract with  
30 qualified entities to manage the program.

31 **1. Scholarships.** The program provides financial aid scholarships to individuals who  
32 meet the requirements of this subsection. An individual receiving a scholarship must be:

33 A. Enrolled in or accepted into an accredited early childhood education program or  
34 related field and pursuing an associate, bachelor's or graduate degree;

35 B. A resident of this State; and

36 C. Committed to employment in this State as a child care provider or early childhood  
37 educator for a period of time determined by department rule after completion of the  
38 degree or certification awarded while receiving the scholarship.

39 **2. Apprenticeships.** The program provides apprenticeships to individuals who meet  
40 the requirements of this subsection. An individual receiving an apprenticeship must be:

41 A. Employed or seeking employment at a child care facility licensed under section  
42 8301-A, subsection 2 or by a family child care provider licensed under section 8301-A,  
43 subsection 3; and

1 B. Committed to employment in this State as a child care provider or early childhood  
2 educator for a period of time determined by department rule after the designated  
3 apprenticeship period has been completed.

4 **3. Rulemaking.** The department shall adopt rules to implement this section. Rules  
5 adopted pursuant to this subsection are routine technical rules as defined in Title 5, chapter  
6 375, subchapter 2-A.

7 Funds for this program may be provided through appropriations from the General  
8 Fund, federal funds, grants or private donations; such funds do not lapse to the General  
9 Fund. All revenues credited to the fund must be distributed to support scholarships and  
10 apprenticeships based on financial need and eligibility as determined by department rules.  
11 Scholarships and apprenticeships awarded may not exceed the amount of funding available.

12 **Sec. 5. State Board of Education to develop opportunities for child care**  
13 **and early childhood education programs and courses in career and technical**  
14 **education centers.** The State Board of Education shall update its state plan for career  
15 and technical education required pursuant to the Maine Revised Statutes, Title 20-A,  
16 section 8306 to develop opportunities for child care and early childhood education  
17 programs and courses in career and technical education centers. The plan must ensure that  
18 educational opportunities are available in all regions of the State as established in Title  
19 20-A, section 8451. The State Board of Education shall collaborate with the centers and  
20 regions and with the Department of Health and Human Services. No later than January 2,  
21 2026, the State Board of Education shall submit its updated state plan to the Joint Standing  
22 Committee on Health and Human Services and the Joint Standing Committee on Education  
23 and Cultural Affairs. The committees are authorized to report out legislation to the Second  
24 Regular Session of the 132nd Legislature.

25 **Sec. 6. Sustainability of Maine Child Care Affordability Program.** The  
26 Department of Health and Human Services shall develop a long-term plan that ensures  
27 financial sustainability of the Maine Child Care Affordability Program established in the  
28 Maine Revised Statutes, Title 22, section 3731-A. The plan must include the necessary  
29 level of funding that must be appropriated in order to serve all families that qualify for the  
30 Maine Child Care Affordability Program. The department shall submit a report with the  
31 long-term plan to the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services no later  
32 than January 2, 2026. The committee is authorized to report out legislation to the Second  
33 Regular Session of the 132nd Legislature.

34 **Sec. 7. Appropriations and allocations.** The following appropriations and  
35 allocations are made.

36 **HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES, DEPARTMENT OF**  
37 **Child Care Services 0563**

38 Initiative: Provides funding for the monthly wage supplement awarded to child care  
39 workers under the Salary Sustainability Program for Child Care Professionals.

40 <b>GENERAL FUND</b>	<b>2025-26</b>	<b>2026-27</b>
41 All Other	\$500,000	\$500,000
42		
43 GENERAL FUND TOTAL	<u>\$500,000</u>	<u>\$500,000</u>

1	<b>Child Care Services 0563</b>		
2	Initiative: Provides funding to support the child care needs of families in the Maine Child		
3	Care Affordability Program Child Care Award.		
4	<b>GENERAL FUND</b>	<b>2025-26</b>	<b>2026-27</b>
5	All Other	\$1,000,000	\$1,000,000
6			
7	GENERAL FUND TOTAL	<u>\$1,000,000</u>	<u>\$1,000,000</u>
8	<b>Child Care Services 0563</b>		
9	Initiative: Provides one-time funding for the Maine Child Care Affordability Program.		
10	<b>GENERAL FUND</b>	<b>2025-26</b>	<b>2026-27</b>
11	All Other	\$3,800,000	\$0
12			
13	GENERAL FUND TOTAL	<u>\$3,800,000</u>	<u>\$0</u>
14			
15	<b>HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES,</b>		
16	<b>DEPARTMENT OF</b>		
17	<b>DEPARTMENT TOTALS</b>	<b>2025-26</b>	<b>2026-27</b>
18			
19	<b>GENERAL FUND</b>	<b>\$5,300,000</b>	<b>\$1,500,000</b>
20			
21	<b>DEPARTMENT TOTAL - ALL FUNDS</b>	<u><b>\$5,300,000</b></u>	<u><b>\$1,500,000</b></u>

22 **SUMMARY**

23 This bill does the following.

24 1. It replaces the early childhood educator workforce salary supplement system with  
25 the Salary Sustainability Program for Child Care Professionals. It establishes requirements  
26 for the program, requires 5-year assessments and provides funding for the program.

27 2. It enacts the child care staff scholarship program established as a pilot program in  
28 Public Law 2023, chapter 643, Part TT as a permanent program in the Maine Revised  
29 Statutes known as the Maine Child Care Affordability Program Child Care Award.

30 3. It establishes a program of child care provider scholarships for early childhood  
31 education or related fields to eligible individuals pursuing associate, bachelor's or graduate  
32 degrees or certificates in those fields.

33 4. It establishes a program of apprenticeships for individuals employed or seeking  
34 employment at a licensed child care facility or licensed family child care provider.

35 5. It requires the State Board of Education to update its plan for career and technical  
36 education centers to include opportunities for early childhood education and child care  
37 education at career and technical education centers around the State.

38 6. It requires the Department of Health and Human Services to develop a long-term  
39 plan for financial sustainability of the Maine Child Care Affordability Program and submit  
40 a report to the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services no later than  
41 January 2, 2026.

1           7. It requires an appropriation of \$3,800,000 to the Maine Child Care Affordability  
2 Program and a yearly appropriation of \$500,000 for wage supplement awards and  
3 \$1,000,000 to support child care needs.