



FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT®  
FOR HEALTHY LIVING  
FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

Testimony of Casey Clark Kelley before  
the Committee On Appropriations and Financial Affairs and  
the Committee on Health and Human Services  
in support of

**LD 258: An Act Making Unified Appropriations and Allocations from the General Fund and Other Funds for the Expenditures of State Government and Changing Certain Provisions of the Law Necessary to the Proper Operations of State Government for the Fiscal Years Ending June 30, 2023, June 30, 2024, and June 30, 2025**  
(Governor's Bill) Sponsored by Representative Melanie Sachs

February 21, 2023

Senator Rotundo, Representative Sachs, members of the Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs, and Senator Baldacci, Representative Meyer, members of the Committee on Health and Human Services, my name is Casey Clark Kelley and I'm the CEO of Central Lincoln County YMCA in Damariscotta, serving over 100 children in our child care programs, and am a resident of Jefferson. I support the investments in the child care industry in the Governor's budget proposal.

Collectively, the 15 YMCAs in Maine are the largest childcare provider in the state. We serve thousands of children in our early childhood education programs, before/after school programs, and summer camp. These programs provide children with safe, nurturing and enriching care, and are a critical component of our state's infrastructure to support working parents and our economy.

There are a couple components of this bill in particular that I want to highlight as impactful for the YMCA. We greatly appreciate the Governor's inclusion of these initiatives.

- 1) Funding to annualize funds received in Public Law 2021, chapter 635 for salary supplements awarded to individuals who provide childcare or are early childhood educators. (Page 307) The \$200/month salary supplements have helped us better support our staff and retain them in the childcare field. It is challenging to pay our childcare staff a competitive salary while striving to keep the cost of childcare low to families, as they aren't able to pay at a higher rate that would allow the program to pay for itself. The salary supplement allows us to better meet this goal. If we were to lose this funding, our Y would have to absorb the financial impact to keep our staff at the level they have been receiving, and we are already operating at a deficit due to the impact of the pandemic.
- 2) Funding to annualize funds received in Public Law 2021, chapter 679, An Act to Expand the Statewide Voluntary Early Childhood Consultation Program, for the Early Childhood Consultation Program. (Page 333) Our Y programs have seen an increase in challenging behaviors with our youth. It is important that we are supporting them with all resources available.

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Ensuring that all young children have an equal opportunity for healthy growth and development is a long-term investment in Maine's future prosperity. 90% of a child's brain develops as early as five years old, and positive early learning experiences establish strong foundations for the brain's architecture. We appreciate the initiatives outlined in the Governor's budget, and look forward to working with you and your colleagues this session to further increase the state investment in this critical sector.

Respectfully submitted,

Casey Clark Kelley  
Chief Executive Officer  
Central Lincoln County YMCA

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