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I am the Early Childhood Program Coordinator for Breakwater School in Portland, Maine where I have worked for the past ten years. The issue of turnover of faculty within our early childhood program has been chronic. Time and again, talented teachers have chosen to leave the early childhood education field because they could not support themselves with the compensation that is available.

It is irrefutable through countless research that the most influential time in the development of life of a person is from birth to five years old - and we have driven talented teachers and caregivers away from the field from its inception by undervaluing their work. As a society, we pay the price of this misguided strategy in literally every other public and private institution everyday.

The turnover and difficulty staffing only became worse during COVID. We have had to decrease the number of hours we provide care to our families because we weren't going to compromise our quality of care by attempting to fill our staff with a parade of under qualified people - when we could even get them.

Now, other industries are appreciating the burden the lack of childcare has on them.

However, with the cost of living becoming even more expensive, with rents in Portland competing with those of Boston - we continue to be faced with talented teachers having to leave because they can't afford to stay in the field.

There is no better investment in the quality of life in Maine than to invest in the youngest members of your society - and those that care and educate them.

I urge you to pass this act.