

Testimony of Lorri Vaillancourt  
In support of  
***LD 1726: An Act to Build Maine's Economy by Supporting Child Care for Working Families  
sponsored by Senate President Troy Jackson***

Senator Baldacci, Representative Meyer, and distinguished members of the Health and Human Services Committee, my name is Lorri Vaillancourt. I am a WCAP Site Supervisor, and I live in Knox, Maine. I'm testifying in support of LD 1726 An Act to Build Maine's Economy by Supporting Child Care and Working Families.

We are having a hard time recruiting/retaining qualified staff due to the relatively low wages for a job that requires a college degree. This causes us to be understaffed which causes stress to the staff we do have and causes us to have to close classrooms when staff are sick as we do not have the coverage we need to maintain ratios.

I support Maine developing a cost model tool that better supports our understanding of what it costs to provide quality care and education to show the value of funding a program that provides high quality Early Education and why we need funding levels to increase.

The cost of living has increased significantly in recent years and wages are not keeping up with the increased cost of food, housing, childcare etc Childcare centers need to charge more to keep in business and parents need support to afford quality childcare.

I support ensuring that subsidy reimbursements cover days when children are absent from their program because the costs are still there, centers still have the expenses even when a child is absent due to illness or other reasons.

We are struggling to keep qualified staff due to low wages. Families are struggling and the needs of children in our programs are increasing, we are seeing more trauma related behavior and language delays. The sooner children are enrolled in a high quality child development program the more successful they will later in their schooling and life. Head Start supports the development of the whole family not just the child and increases the likelihood they will improve their lives through education, resources and guidance.

ECE wages are very low and one way we can support a high quality workforce is to make sure they can secure reasonable childcare. I support shortening the time periods for determining subsidy eligibility so that people can retain jobs by making sure they can afford high quality childcare. I also support shortening the time periods for child care programs to receive subsidy reimbursement because childcare programs need to be able to pay their bills to stay in business.

Please vote in support of LD 1726, Lorri Vaillancourt