

Testimony of Bridget Barden

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 Bridget Barden. I am a Family Child Care Provider, and I live in Hollis Center. I'm testifying in support of LD 1726 An Act to Build Maine's Economy by Supporting Child Care and Working Families.

As an early educator myself, I support raising the wage of this profession so that we can make enough money to support ourselves, and contribute meaningfully to our household incomes.

I support Maine developing a cost model that supports understanding the true costs of quality care and education because I think most people don't have a true understanding of the costs associated with child care, ranging from materials and supplies, to cost of employee wages, and the overhead costs associated with the overall care and maintenance of the facility in which the child care is located in.

I think by increasing subsidy eligibility, you are affording many more families the opportunity to ensure their children are receiving high quality care and education in their early years. Many families in Maine straddle the line of eligibility. Raising the subsidy eligibility will allow families to continue to grow in their respective careers without the worry of losing their access to affordable child care.

Supporting more stable funding ensures that child care programs are funded regardless of attendance. Programs budget their expenses based on their projected income from tuition. When a child who is private pay is not at school, the expectation is that they pay their tuition. When subsidy doesn't pay when children are absent, the programs which serve them are then operating at a deficit, while their costs have not gone down.

I support Maine developing a long term plan to increase investment to encourage and support people moving into Maine. By showing that we value child care, and the children and families that are served, we show people who are interested in moving to Maine that we are an ever expanding and growing state, which values the work of supporting children and families.

I support increasing Head Start eligibility and funding to open access to families in more rural parts of Maine access high quality early education. By changing the eligibility to be more encompassing, you are supporting the larger landscape of the community and economy by allowing more caregivers of young children to work and excel in the workforce.

I support funding to pay for child care employees because as a child care employee, the cost of care is very high for me. I also recognize that when I am allotted an employee discount, the program I work for takes a financial loss for that discount. While the cost of care for my child doesn't change from the cost of care of the other children, the income his tuition brings in does change.

I think shortening the time period can help more families to access subsidy. When subsidy has a longer wait period, getting families into child care programs. Access to child care is hard to come by currently, and when there is a longer wait time, families can end up missing the

opportunity to enroll their child because they can not guarantee that they can afford the childcare program without the subsidy funds.

I think the shortened time period for child care programs is important because child care programs count on tuition to pay their own expenses. When the tuition is late, that means that the child care program then becomes behind on paying out their costs. When child care programs show that they have met the requirements that the CCSP has set for them, then they should not be waiting on their funds, especially when the funds are available.

Please vote in support of LD 1726,
Bridget Barden