

Testimony of Wendy Getchell
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 Wendy Getchell. I am a Preschool Director, and I live in Portland. I'm testifying in support of LD 1726 An Act to Build Maine's Economy by Supporting Child Care and Working Families.

Early Childhood Educators in the field have BA and Master's Degrees and are essential professionals in the field in the formative years for children and families. They deserve a wage that is reflective of their profession and time dedicated to their roles. Many work paycheck to paycheck and have second jobs even when they have gone to college and view this work as a career. I support raising wages that reflect not only a livable wage for the high cost of living in our state now, but also one reflective of the education and experience of our educators we need to retain.

I support Maine developing a cost model tool that better supports our understanding of what it costs to provide quality care and education because this makes sense and will help close that gap.

I support raising subsidy eligibility for Maine's lower income families so that care can be something attainable to all families and this could meet more needs and provide a larger reach to those families.

I support ensuring that subsidy reimbursement covers days when children are absent from their program because as a preschool, staff is need for our enrollment and so we can offer sustainable jobs to those in this career path. This means we are offering more salaried positions with benefits and when a family enrolls they commit to pay for the schedule they enroll for. this also allows us to pay teachers based on that enrollment. By ensuring subsidy reimbursement for the scheduled days regardless, this also ensures that programs can pay the staff they have hired as well as the care.

Early Childhood is in desperate need of consistent funding so that we can support the children, families and the educators. Early childhood is just as important, if not the most important time in a child's education during the formative years, and so the support and investment needs to match.

I support increasing Head Start eligibility and funding because the more funding there is the more families that can access care.

I support providing funding to pay for child care for child care employees so that the cost of raising wages doesn't fall on having to raise tuition to cover the much needed pay hikes. EC needs more state and federal support built in to support these wages.

Please vote in support of LD 1726,
Wendy Getchell

