

Testimony of Michele Plazeski  
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 Michele Plazeski. I am a toddler teacher, 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.

Without an increase in wages for child care workers, we will continue to see exactly what we are seeing now. Childcare centers closing, staff shortages and long wait lists for the limited space available for Maine's families. Limited availability means families may have to make difficult decisions that can have lasting impacts on both the family and the local economy. Childcare and working parents go hand in hand. Without either, what does that mean?? In my mind something that is frightening to everyones future! Parents may be forced to place their children in care that is NOT desirable in order for them to continue to work so that they can pay living expenses. With that being said, childcare workers like myself CANNOT afford to pay for living expenses for themselves. I am a 51 year old single parent. I DO NOT earn enough money to pay my bills. I work full time in a toddler program 40 hours a week. I also HAVE to work 2 other jobs on top of being a single parent to a teen age girl that lives with me full time. Phew, when do i breathe?!!! How do I manage? I have learned how to work myself to the bone. Working with children is a demanding job both physically and emotionally. You have to be present with children, engaging and respectful. It also requires patience and compassion. Why is it that OUR society does not view early childhood as a crucial time in a child's life. Science says, brain development that takes place in the first 3 years of life, is the most rapid development that will take place. Neural pathways are making their connections with the help of well paid, college educated teachers. What happens if you don't have childcare teachers that understand this and place value on their role in a young child's life? Hmmmmm.....again that is also frightening! We place more money in our prison systems than we do into starting our children off with a healthy foundation in quality childcare centers! This will only happen when we start paying a livable wage that is inclusive for ALL to feel they are able to "choose" to work in childcare. It should be looked at as a "privilege and a gift" to have the opportunity to work with such an exceptional population.

Please vote in support of LD 1726,  
Michele Plazeski