

Testimony of Lauri Doucette

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 Lauri Doucette. I am a Family Childcare Provider, and I live in Albion. I'm testifying in support of LD 1726 An Act to Build Maine's Economy by Supporting Child Care and Working Families.

I support an increase in childcare educator wages in part because of the rise in cost of living. If people want to gain and retain well trained, competent early childhood educators, they need to pay them a rate that is livable. Working with young children is hard. It is easy to become burnt out quickly. Not being able to afford basic needs from your wages only makes the burn out occur quicker.

I support Maine developing a cost model tool that better supports our understanding of what it costs to provide quality care and education because looking at the subsidy rates currently paid to providers, it is obvious that the whoever decided those amounts does not know the current cost of caring for children right now. As a small in home provider, I cannot afford to take more than one or two children on the subsidy program because it doesn't pay enough to cover healthy food, activities, supplies, and replacing items that get broken through constant use.

Childcare is expensive. If we want to support both growing families and providers, we need to increase the income limits for subsidy and increase the payments to childcare providers. Most working class families cannot afford childcare for more than one or maybe two children. It is more than a mortgage in most areas.

I support ensuring that subsidy reimbursement covers days when children are absent from their program because this encourages families to keep their children home when sick and also doesn't penalize providers for sending home sick children. Also providers depend on regular wages. Without consistent income we would not be able to continue running our programs. Paying the same rate regardless of attendance would make providers feel more secure in taking children on the subsidy program.

Please vote in support of LD 1726,
Lauri Doucette