



Penobscot County Sheriff's Office

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Troy J. Morton
Sheriff

John Knappe
Chief Deputy

TESTIMONY BY TROY MORTON, PENOBCOT COUNTY SHERIFF AND MEMBER, FIGHT CRIME: INVEST IN KIDS

BEFORE THE JOINT STANDING COMMITTEES ON HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

IN SUPPORT OF LD 1726

“AN ACT TO BUILD MAINE’S ECONOMY BY SUPPORTING CHILD CARE FOR WORKING FAMILIES”

May 5, 2023 at 1000am

Chairs Baldacci and Myer, and distinguished members of the Health and Human Services Committee, I am Penobscot County Sheriff Troy Morton, and like my fellow law enforcement leaders testifying on this proposal before you today, I am a nine-year member of [Fight Crime: Invest in Kids](#), a national anti-crime organization of law enforcement leaders, 140 of whom are here in Maine. As members we talk about research-proven programs that help children, particularly our youngest children, get a head start in life, arrive at public school ready to learn and thrive, and stay away from contact with crime. We support investment in quality programming for our youngest children. In that light, I am pleased to support LD 1726 and the provisions it embraces to increase access, and support our critical child care workforce.

Like Sheriff Merry, I am also a former President of the Maine Sheriffs Association, a father, a grandfather, and an active community member. In all of these capacities I am here to testify about the importance and value high-quality child care and Head Start have in our communities. These programs, and their valuable staff, are key to providing care for our children so parents can go to work with the confidence that their children are being well cared for while they work to support them.

I join Sheriff Merry and Chief Moen in offering this Committee the unique perspective on how high-quality early learning improves community safety by reducing later crime.

Sheriff Merry shared the research behind the decades-long study of the Chicago Child-Parent Centers and how these programs, which have served hundreds of thousands of young children, have reduced violent crime. Chief Moen testified about the anti-crime efficacy of Boston’s preschool program.



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I will add that studies from across the nation, in places as diverse as Boston and Arkansas, and New Jersey and Michigan, and beyond, show that quality early care and education is a major crime-fighting tool in the long run.

Specifically, these studies show that high-quality early learning programs get children ready to learn when they enter kindergarten. They show that children who have experienced high-quality early learning are less likely to be held back in school. They also show that these programs help kids achieve higher reading and math scores, and that these increases persist into later grade levels, and increase graduation rates. This is a vitally important result, when you consider that six out of 10 prisoners nationwide lack a high school diploma.

That figure helps illustrate the relationship between positive educational outcomes and long-term crime prevention. Additional investments in early education programs, especially child care and Head Start embraced in LD 1726, help to improve those outcomes, close educational achievement gaps, and make our communities safer.

I urge this Committee to give LD 1726 your support.

Thank you for your consideration and your service to Maine.

A handwritten signature in dark ink that reads "Sheriff Troy Morton".

Sheriff Troy Morton