

Testimony of Sharon Talbot
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 Sharon Talbot. I am a childcare director, and I live in South Berwick. I'm testifying in support of LD 1726 An Act to Build Maine's Economy by Supporting Child Care and Working Families.

Child care educators support the youngest members of the state's families, and provide high quality care and education to prepare them for public school. The wages that are currently offered across the state are not enough to live on. Raising wages for child care educators is important! They care for the youngest members of our society, and they need to know that they are respected and deserve a wage that they can live on, without having to have a second job. Raising child care educator wages will make it easier to find employees. The burden of that wage can't be placed on the parents to cover in tuition fees though. Early education needs to be supported by the state.

The cost of providing quality care and education continues to rise. Developing a cost model tool will assist us in being able to see the actual costs of care. The demands put on Centers through state licensing directly impacts the bottom line. As a small Center we are unable to afford to offer our employees insurance, because the cost is prohibitive. The Center that I run is in a town that has summer visitors. In the summer the grocery store prices increase which directly impacts my program, and the food that we can provide.

Raising subsidy eligibility will help those families that are struggling. One of our parents , who had infant twins, was attending school in order to get a better job, and also working, but the support from the subsidy program was barely enough for her to get by. She ended up moving to another state.

I support ensuring that subsidy reimbursement covers days when children are absent from their program because child care programs should be reimbursed for every day that the children are enrolled in the program, not just the days that they are in attendance. The program incurs costs everyday, not just the days that the child attends.

Developing a longterm plan to increase investments in child care programs while also increasing subsidy eligibility is crucial to the survival of the child care system. Child care allows parents to work. If child care isn't supported and available, it directly impacts the workforce.

I support shortened time periods for determining subsidy eligibility because our Center relies on grant money to help cover costs for families while waiting for determining subsidy eligibility, and grant money has been harder to come by to help cover those costs.

Please vote in support of LD 1726,
Sharon Talbot