

Testimony of Molly Adams
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 Molly Adams. I am a parent, I work in marketing & sales, 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.

My family's, and my neighbors families' lives are better because of our incredible child care educators. We have the data that quality early childhood education is key to unlocking positive lifelong health, wealth, and happiness outcomes. We have the data that quality early childhood education is an important equalizer for children from different socioeconomic backgrounds. And we have the data that reliable childcare keeps adults, particularly women, working full-time and contributing to a larger GDP.

It is beyond time for our EC educators to be paid what they are worth, especially in my urban district, where housing and food costs are outpacing what one can even earn in the ECE system. It infuriates and depresses me that one of our best teachers had to leave his passion to work at the Spectrum call center.

EC educators are easily exploited because of how much they care for what they do—caring for and teaching the most vulnerable members of our society. Enough! Nurturing children should be a competitive job where pay reflects the immense, positive impact they have on our whole culture.

A cost model tool is important to communicate the scope of the situation to taxpayers and lawmakers. We all benefit from upcoming generations receiving consistent, quality care, but if people are not current parents of young children, they may not be familiar with the full scope of the economic situation.

We must raise the subsidy eligibility to include more Maine families living on the edge. Qualifying for the subsidy and having the co-pay waived between 2021 and 2022 has helped my young family create long term savings and stability in a short period of time. We were able to contribute more to our daughter's 529 account. We were able to maintain our grocery budget as consumer prices shot up. We were able to buy a house during this time and those unseen costs could be met without anxiety. Those weekly savings have simply added up to way less stress and much more happiness in our home.

Like any school, a child care center needs a dependable budget. Subsidies should cover days that students are absent so that small business owners or nonprofit directors can have stability and provide steady employment and services for years on end.

We are the oldest state in the country. To ensure our economic future, we need to attract young workers in all sectors, at all income levels to our state, and we need to make it a friendly place to raise a family. There are many factors at play, especially housing costs, but I feel that investing in well-funded, high quality childcare systems staffed by talented employees are one of the simplest ways to support working families.

I support increasing Head Start eligibility and funding because Head Start is a lifeline for working parents, especially in our mostly rural state. Having a child opened my eyes to the fact that early childhood education is just as important for development as primary/grammar education, and yet we do not extend public funding for this age group. The Head Start model is a starting point for this.

I support providing funding to pay for child care for child care employees because child care employees are working parents too. It is nonsensical that their labor caring for other children would not cover their own childcare costs.

Please vote in support of LD 1726,
Molly Adams