

Testimony of Annie Colaluca
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 Annie Colaluca. I am a Center Director, and I live in Brunswick. I'm testifying in support of LD 1726 An Act to Build Maine's Economy by Supporting Child Care and Working Families.

Stability for the workforce is a must, we must pay staff fair wages to support them in this critical role they play. Retaining and attracting staff to the field has been an ongoing issue and child cares state wide continue to close, as they cannot meet staffing demands to remain open.

The cost of care is not something that has truly been reflected in the past. We must get to the point where we are able to truly value the cost of care for our most valuable resource, the future. Children birth-5 require immense care, knowledge and expertise. The people who do this work deserve this cost to be known, which is why I support Maine developing a cost model tool that better supports our understanding of what it costs to provide quality care and education.

It is a great dis-service to the families qualifying for subsidy to be turned away to programs due to the mere fact that it costs a program financially to have these children in the program. The state must pay a program in full for services, as one would expect of any other service which requires financing.

Child cares cannot survive from partial payments. When children attend a program for 5 full days of care, it meets the budget for the program to pay staff. Therefore, the only model that makes sense for subsidy reimbursement is for a slot to be paid for in full, regardless of how many days the child attends.

Subsidy is an incredibly beneficial program and we need to expand eligibility, as we look to support more families working. Child cares need to consider subsidy an equal partner in helping meet financial needs.

Head Start investments are critical to ensuring our state has options and opportunities for all children. We need to increase the number of children who are provided these quality early learning opportunities, such as Head Start.

I support providing funding to pay for child care for child care employees because bringing the workforce back to work in child care centers will require staff to bring along a child. Should there not be care for this family, there is no ability for the staff to attend to their job. It's a catch 22, and one impacting childcares on a daily basis.

Please vote in support of LD 1726,
Annie Colaluca