

Testimony of Amelia Patel

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 Amelia Patel. I am a CPA and the Treasurer of Peopleplace Cooperative Preschool in Camden. I live in Warren. I'm testifying in support of LD 1726 An Act to Build Maine's Economy by Supporting Child Care and Working Families.

I am in awe of the work our child care educators do. I am the Treasurer of Peopleplace Cooperative Preschool in Camden and we have an amazing staff. We struggle every year with how much we can afford to pay our staff while keeping childcare somewhat affordable for our families. I STRONGLY believe that our staff is underpaid and most of them do not make a livable wage. I believe that the individuals we trust with our children are incredibly valuable and incredibly underpaid. They could go into any number of different careers and easily make much more than they make as early childcare educators. It honestly feels unfair, which is why I support raising child care educator wages.

I support Maine developing a cost model tool that better supports our understanding of what it costs to provide quality care and education because it's important for the state to understand the struggles we face as quality preschools in Maine. Our school is quite frugal and we do our best to limit unnecessary expenditures, but it is still difficult to pay the teachers what they are worth.

I support raising subsidy eligibility for Maine's lower income families because in order to afford to pay childcare staff a living wage we have to increase tuition. If we increase tuition, the burden on families is too great and childcare becomes inaccessible for many. It's a catch-22. If we had more support for lower income families, we could spend more of our fundraising money on supporting our low-income staff. We could also potentially increase tuition for those who can afford it and further support our staff wages.

Please vote in support of LD 1726,