

Testimony of Karen Lin
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 Karen Lin. I am a preschool teacher, and I live in Windham. I'm testifying in support of LD 1726 An Act to Build Maine's Economy by Supporting Child Care and Working Families.

I support raising child care educator wages because children, families and educators need stability. Poor wages has made the childcare system unreliable. The small cooperative school where I work spent four months looking for a new educator and we almost had to close our doors a week before school was scheduled to start because we had not yet found someone. I myself have been tempted to leave this field knowing that I could make more money elsewhere.

All the costs involved in childcare are not obvious and they add up. A clear picture would be helpful when deciding the level of support this field needs, 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.

I support raising subsidy eligibility for Maine's lower income families because child care costs are daunting even for families with good incomes. Families need more support as they raise the young children who will become our future citizens and workforce.

I support ensuring that subsidy reimbursement covers days when children are absent from their program because I actually quit a childcare job where reimbursement was dependent on a child being present. If too many children were absent I was sent home and not paid for that day. I never knew how many hours or how much money I would make each week. I definitely did not feel treated like a professional and my time was not being valued. There is always something that can be done to provide care even if some children are absent - other children can get more attention, supplies can be prepared and cleaned out, training can be completed and all those things improve care for everyone.

If Maine became a leader in supporting childcare more families would stay in Maine and move here. With a reputation for affordable and accessible childcare the state could attract families willing to work which is important for an aging state like Maine, which is why I support Maine developing a long term plan to increase investments in child care programs while also increasing subsidy eligibility.

I support increasing Head Start eligibility and funding because I have personally known families turned away from Head Start because there wasn't space. More funding is the clear solution.

I support providing funding to pay for child care for child care employees because the perk of knowing your child will have a subsidized spot in a quality program while you provide care to other people's children would be a real incentive to increasing the childcare workforce.

I support shortened time periods for determining subsidy eligibility because children grow and develop quickly and employers have demanding timelines and bills have due dates. Decreasing the wait for a decision of eligibility would better help address these realities.

I support shortened time periods for child care programs receiving subsidy reimbursement because some programs do not even accept reimbursements and the delay is one reason why. Making accepting subsidies an easier and more attractive option would increase the options families have.

Please vote in support of LD 1726,
Karen Lin