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Testimony of Meg Helming before
the Committee on Health and Human Services
in opposition to
LD 1729: An Act To Reduce Child Care Provider Regulation
May 10, 2023

Senator Baldacci, Representative Meyer, esteemed members of the Committee on Health and Human Services, my name is Meg Helming and I'm testifying on behalf of the 15 YMCAs in Maine in opposition to LD 1729: *An Act To Reduce Child Care Provider Regulation*.

Collectively, the 15 YMCAs in Maine are the largest childcare provider in the state. We serve thousands of children in our early childhood education programs, before/after school programs, and summer camp. These programs provide children with safe, nurturing and enriching care, and are a critical component of our state's infrastructure to support working parents and our economy.

The childcare sector is facing significant challenges, and the lack of accessible and affordable care hurts Maine families and our economy. We understand the desire to increase access to care – but stand firmly with our partners in the field to say, never at the expense of children's safety. Efforts such as this bill undermine the critical health and safety protocols that protect our most vulnerable members of society – young children. We are particularly concerned about two aspects of this bill:

- 1) Authorizing a recipient of the childcare subsidy to pay the difference between the amount of the subsidy and the amount charged by the childcare provider.
 - a. We believe this places an unreasonable burden on low-income families and will further hinder their access to licensed childcare.
- 2) Increasing the staff-child ratios; for example, this bill would allow one adult with six infants, and one adult with 18 three- and four-year olds.
 - a. We believe this is unsafe and contrary to the best interests of Maine children.
 - b. This is a dramatic increase from current Maine licensing standards (1:4 for infants up to one year old; 1:10 for children ages 3-5 years old). It is also out of line with the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) accreditation standards (1:4 for infants up to 15 months old; 1:10 for children ages 3-5 years old).

This committee will review several bills this session that address the biggest challenges in our sector and present opportunities to invest in our state's childcare system to increase Maine families' access to safe, high quality care. Our efforts focus on building up our workforce, strengthening the subsidy program, and partnering with businesses on shared solutions – not rolling back licensing requirements that keep children safe.

We urge you to vote ought not to pass on LD 1729.

Respectfully submitted,

Meg Helming
YMCA Alliance of Northern New England

Maine YMCAs:

Auburn-Lewiston YMCA • Bangor Region YMCA • Bath Area Family YMCA • Boothbay Region YMCA • Central Lincoln County YMCA • Down East Family YMCA • Kennebec Valley YMCA • Mount Desert Island YMCA • Old Town-Orono YMCA • Penobscot Bay YMCA • Sanford-Springvale YMCA • State YMCA of Maine • Waldo County YMCA • YMCA of Greater Waterville • YMCA of Southern Maine

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