

Emily Short
Chebeague Island
LD 1799

Senator Rafferty, Representative Brennan, and distinguished members of the Education and Cultural Affairs Committee, my name is Emily Short. I am the Director of Sunnybrook Montessori School, and I live in Lancaster, NH. I'm testifying in support of LD 1799 An Act to Expand Maine's High-quality Early Learning and Care for Children by Increasing Public Preschool Opportunities in Communities.

I stand before you today with hope that my words resonate and make a difference in the lives of the early educators who currently work in the state of Maine. It was not long ago that I stood in the same shoes, as a Lead Teacher and Director of a small Child Care center and Preschool on Chebeague Island. However, due to a lack of funds and healthcare, I was left with no choice but to move on. In my few short years living on Chebeague Island, I grew a heightened awareness of the fragile ecosystems Early Educators and families alike face on a daily basis in rural communities. The center where I taught was the only center on the island, and although we only served 10 children, each one of those children deserved a high quality program. The families I supported on the small island were the very people who define our working class. The families who worked from sunup to sun down to ensure the well being of their own community. My program supported the children of the Lobstermen, the Town Clerk, Public School Educators, and Carpenters. After my departure, the center sat vacant, unable to hire qualified workers for over five months. If my program could have had access to stable pre-k funding it could have helped support operations, helped raise my wages, and helped support the working class families. Early Educators are in the business of building bridges, not roadblocks. When we support the foundations in early education, with funds and quality programs, we are not only supporting our children, but our economy. Please vote in support of LD1799 and show your support for our children, early educators, and working class families.

Thank you.