

Rosalyn Fisher
Bangor
LD 1726

Testimony of Rosalyn Fisher
In Support of
LD 1726 An Act to Build Maine's Economy
by Supporting Child Care and Working Families

Senator Baldacci, Representative Meyer, and distinguished members of the Health and Human Services Committee, my name is Rosalyn Fisher. I am a retired occupational therapist and member of the Childcare/Jobs Team, Faith Linking in Action. I am testifying in support of LD 1726, An Act to Build Maine's Economy by Supporting Child Care and Working Families

In over 40 years in occupational therapy practice I worked with children from infancy through high school, and taught child development to occupational therapy students and to child care providers.

As a member of the Childcare/Jobs Team, I have listened to parents who had so much trouble applying for the Child Care Subsidy that they gave up, and to other parents who simply could not find affordable, high quality child care so they reduced their hours, quit their jobs or begged retired parents to come back from Florida to care for their children. I have heard from child care providers who have long wait lists and have had to close rooms due to staff shortages. They appreciated the Federal and State support, but the \$1.00 an hour increase in the wage supplement has not been enough to attract new providers to work long hours for low compensation, or retain those who have had to leave the field they loved in order to get a job that provides living wages and benefits.

Child Care has been in a crisis for many years, but the Pandemic brought the problems into the headlines as child cares closed and parents could not work. The Child Care Workforce is the workforce behind the workforce. A highly qualified workforce ensures that children are in a place where they can learn and grow, and parents can concentrate on their jobs. I support LD 1726 because Maine needs a long term plan to increase investments in Child Care Programs while also increasing subsidy eligibility. Parents need increased access to high quality affordable child care and providers need the increase in the wage supplement from \$200 to \$400 a month.

I also urge the Committee to address the additional crisis for parents of children who have disorders or delays and struggle to find high quality child care so their child can develop to his fullest potential. I knew a family child care provider who arranged the lunch schedule for the older children, so she and I could meet with the infant's mother on her lunch hour. In a child care center, a provider got a baby pool, filled it with balls and took the toddler out of his wheelchair to sit in the pool and play with other children. A parent arranged sign language classes for teachers in a pre school, so her son could use his signs at school and the teachers could teach signs to all the children in songs and stories. Early learning for infants and toddlers who have disabilities or delays depends on a partnership of parents, child care providers and specialists, such as therapists to provide education and guidance.

I urge the committee to address this crisis as you support LD 1726.

Thank you for your consideration.