

**TESTIMONY BY PAULA BENOIT
FORMER STATE SENATOR FROM SAGADAHOC**

**BEFORE THE JOINT STANDING COMMITTEES
ON HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES**

**IN SUPPORT OF LD 1726
“AN ACT TO BUILD MAINE’S ECONOMY BY SUPPORTING CHILD CARE FOR WORKING
FAMILIES”
MAY 10, 2023, 10:00AM**

Good morning, Chairs Baldacci and Myer, and distinguished members of the Health and Human Services Committee. My name is Paula Benoit and I live in Phippsburg. I spent many years as an owner and operator of several small businesses in Bath and I am also a former Senator from Sagadahoc County. Today, I wish to offer my wholehearted support for LD 1726 An Act to Build Maine’s Economy by Supporting Child Care for Working Families sponsored by President Troy Jackson.

I learned about the need for this bill in a most unusual way. I was having breakfast with two friends at a favorite spot in Topsham and the hostess who seated us had a 3-month-old baby strapped to her front as she helped people to their seats and cashed people out. While the baby was content to be with her mother and made everyone smile as they entered the restaurant, we learned she brought the baby to work because she could not afford the \$250/ week in child care, so she had no other option if she wanted to work. Luckily, her boss allowed her to have the baby with her and I guarantee all the patrons loved looking at the adorable little girl while her mother went about her job, but I was sorry that this was not a choice but a necessity. The mother wants to work and help provide for her family, but economic circumstances make this almost impossible for her to do.

My friend having breakfast with me understood this all too well. Her daughter works at a child care center in Bath and even though she has a degree in early education, she earns very little doing a job she loves and a job that is so desperately needed. Our childcare system is in crisis.

My third breakfast companion happened to be working for a group that is promoting passage of this legislation, so we spent breakfast learning about the problems and more importantly the solutions to our child care crisis. I have always been a doer. When there is a problem, I want to try and fix it. Fortunately, you have a bill that will help that working mom and her baby by making childcare more affordable and increasing pay for the childcare educators who work 8 to 10 hours a day for less money than they would earn working in a fast-food restaurant. In return this will help employers, large and small, find enough people to work and keep their businesses running. It is win-win legislation with parents and employers reaping the benefits. I hope you will pass and fund LD 1726. Thank you for your consideration.

Paula Benoit
Phippsburg
LD 1726

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