

Testimony of LD 1799

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

Senator Rafferty, Representative Brennan, and distinguished members of the Education and Cultural Affairs Committee, my name is Michelle Pinkham. I am an owner/diretor/teacher of KidQuarters Child Care Center, in New Gloucester Maine. I live in Poland, Maine. 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.

We are a NAEYC accredited program and have tried to be part of the Public PreK Program. We were part of an initial committee to bring Public PreK to programs outside of the schools when PreK was first discussed. The school system did not allow this and I have seen several great nursery/preschool programs close since Public PreK became part of the school system. We still offer a Preschool program to the families we serve, this has impacted our enrollment to half of the students of what we had been able to care for. This also impacts our staffing.

In our program, we can have 2 teachers to each classroom, currently there is one teacher per classroom with a LARGE waitlist; (Infants to school age) with over 60 names waiting for care. I can not hire the teachers to work in a classroom so I can not take the extra children. We have been living week to week to stay open, and the teachers I have currently are committed to stay. Hiring more teachers, including Public PreK would definitely help. We will be in business for 27 years this July, and we do not plan to stop anytime soon.

Hiring has been extremely difficult and the \$200 per month retention for the teachers has been a huge asset for our program to keep the teachers we have. Looking forward; finding health care options that the teachers can actually afford would be great!

Sincerely,
Michelle Pinkham
KidQuarters Child Care Center
414 Tobey Rd, New Gloucester, ME
207-926-5431