

May 9, 2023

RE: TESTIMONY FOR LD 1726 – An Act to Build Maine’s Economy by Supporting Child Care and Working Families

Points: Child born in June, 2020, three months into pandemic

When Pandemic first shut everything down, Mother was attending classes at SMCC and working at small adult care facility. Mother left that position and went to work in convenience store chain as the convenience chain, along with many businesses that don’t pay well and offer no benefits, did one thing other businesses didn’t offer.....the convenience store scheduled employees to work around hours the employees could work. Mother and child’s Father both worked for convenience store and staggered hours as best they could to take care of baby.

It’s important to note that Mother went back to work when little one was three weeks old. There was no maternity leave and monthly rent for a studio apartment was \$1200 monthly, plus utilities.

From the very beginning, I took care of the baby on week days and evenings when schedules overlapped. Child’s grandparents covered weekend days when Mother was scheduled and it over-lapped on Father’s schedule also. I drove from Springvale to Kennebunk, 25 minute drive, sometimes leaving my home as early as 4am. Eventually couple found a larger rental in Springvale, with actually 2 bedrooms and that made commuting easier for me. But Mother became a single parent soon after, leaving her with a rent she couldn’t afford and needing to work even more hours. But we were still coming out of pandemic and day care rates were continuing to soar and openings, even if they would have been available, were scare. So many facilities closed due to COVID.

Eventually the Mother found a cheaper rent and a weekly schedule evolved with me doing three week days, my daughter-in-law doing two week days, and grandparents doing Saturday.

I the A life “reality” occurred in February-March, 2023. I needed to have cataract surgery on both eyes. First surgery was late February and next was scheduled in mid-March. After each surgery was advised to not lift child or even take care of her for a couple of days. Daughter in law stepped in to cover for me. But in between surgeries I got a really bad cold and couldn’t take the little one. It became immediately apparent to Mother that she needed a job that would also provide her with a way to get little one in childcare. She had set a goal for herself to have this happen in June, 2023, when child turned three.

Luck was on her side and she found a position in a child care facility that would be able to take our little one when she turned three. Within a week of starting her position at this facility, they found a place for the little girl and she now goes to work with Mommy every day. Her Mother has weekends off so Auntie and I lost our “jobs”. But, when child is sick, which has happened a lot since starting day care and physicians have assured the Mother that children “build up

resistance”, I now take little one when she is not feeling well, running a fever, has ear infection, etc.

Child care is a temporary need but without child care, parents are held back from attaining better paying positions, from attaining positions that offer health insurance, sick time (real sick time!), and to be able to afford time with their children. But more about THIS!

Other Side’s Points –

Child care providers are taking care of our most precious “possessions” for lack of a better word! As stated in LD1726, child care ranks in the bottom 2% in the employment sector. This is a real black mark on our society. The entire workforce depends on workers being able to be on their jobs when they are needed and expected to be. Child care should be ranked far higher in the employment sector, for the very role it plays in our families and our communities. Parents trying to maneuver in this environment at a time in their lives when they are also trying to enjoy their families and be responsible and do the very best they can by their children, are sometimes barely holding on in a catch 22 situation. We need to look at both sides of this situation and do the best we can for both. LD1726 is a start.

It's been wonderful to have found myself, as a GREAT grandma, to be in good health and in a position to have been able to help my granddaughter, the Mother. I retired just before the pandemic shut down businesses, schools, etc. and God/Fate put me, and my daughter in law, little girl's Auntie, in positions to be able to help and be such important parties in a soon to be three-year-old's life. I'm 77 and Auntie suffered a debilitating stroke a few years ago at a pretty young age for such an incident. We both feel blessed for our parts!