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Testimony of Casey Clark Kelley before  
the Committee 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

Senator Baldacci, Representative Meyer, and honorable members of the Committee on Health and Human Services, my name is Casey Clark Kelley and I'm CEO of the Central Lincoln County YMCA. I support LD 1726: *An Act to Build Maine's Economy by Supporting Child Care for Working Families*.

Collectively, the 15 YMCAs in Maine are the largest childcare provider in the state. We serve thousands of children in our early childhood education programs, before/afterschool programs, and summer camp. These programs provide children with safe, nurturing and enriching care, and are a critical component of our state's infrastructure to support working parents and our economy.

There are a couple components of this bill in particular that I want to highlight as impactful for my YMCA.

- 1) Improvements to the childcare subsidy program:** The shift from attendance-based to enrollment-based reimbursement for childcare subsidy is an important step in making this critical program work for families and providers. Enrollment-based reimbursement is a more stable and sustainable funding mechanism for providers, meaning we will be better equipped to meet the needs of our communities. We also support policies that allow more families in need to access this support.

The childcare subsidy program is essential for many of our community's low-to-moderate income families to be able to access and afford care. We have many families struggling financially and the subsidy program helps to remove some of the financial burden of childcare. Reimbursement based on enrollment instead of attendance helps to support the sustainability of our organization as it will provide a stable income structure. As our Y continues to recover financially from the pandemic, a higher level of financial support for our operations allows us to continue to provide care and increase capacity for a crucial program that loses money annually.

- 2) Doubling the monthly wage supplement for all childcare workers** is a critical investment in our most important asset – the skilled early educators that teach our state's children and allow us to offer consistent care for working families. Recruiting and retaining qualified staff has been an incredible challenge for us, and impacts the number of children we can serve.

The wage supplement has been a significant retention benefit for our childcare staff. While we are working internally to increase the wages for our childcare staff, we have limitations with we can do as a nonprofit, community-based organization. The stipend adds value to these positions and is appreciated by the employees. This is helping us retain quality staff and provide consistent care to the families we serve. Without stability in our childcare workforce, it is impossible to increase capacity.

Respectfully submitted,

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