



FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT®
FOR HEALTHY LIVING
FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

Testimony of Faith Boynton 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 Faith Boynton, Youth Development Director at the Waldo 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/after school 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 administration of enrollment-based reimbursement is significantly easier for us, meaning we can put more of our limited resources into helping families rather than doing paperwork. With enrollment-based budgeting, we know what to expect, which allows us to better plan and provide more assistance to the families we serve.

- 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 monthly childcare educator salary supplements have helped us to attract and educate a higher quality workforce. However, despite constant recruiting, we are currently down by three early childhood educators, which directly impacts the number of children we can care for. We are in desperate need of more comprehensive investment in our early childhood educator workforce so we can meet the demand for care in our community.

Early education set me up for success. I want to be able to give that to all kids, regardless of their background. At the Waldo County Y, we provide nurturing and enriching care that some kids are unfortunately missing in their home lives. The work we do with these kids sets them on a path for success. We help children gain confidence in themselves and build strong relationships with peers. I think that foundation is critical for our children.

Respectfully submitted,

Faith Boynton
Youth Development Director, Waldo County YMCA

Contact: Faith Boynton, Waldo County YMCA
P: 207 338-4598 **E:** fboynton@waldocountyyymca.org