

Emilie Swenson  
Portland  
LD 1726

Dear Health and Human Services Committee Members,  
My name is Emilie Swenson and I live in Portland. I am parent of an almost four year old and board member of my child's daycare - Youth and Family Outreach, also in Portland.

I am writing to share my experiences with you. Finding child care was a stressful and challenging experience and I was fortunate enough to know that wait lists would be long so I started signing up for daycare lists just weeks after I found out I was pregnant. My husband and I both work full time and therefore we knew that child care was something we would absolutely need in order to maintain our jobs. Child care access is critical to Maine's workforce and our economy. We need to expand opportunities for high quality child care for all families and make it more affordable for more families - expanding the subsidy eligibility will support this.

We also need high quality care and for teachers to be compensated for their incredible skills and talents. Throughout my child's experience in daycare, he has been surrounded by caring, experienced, and educated professionals who create experiences that align with his development and support him to grow and learn in new and exciting ways. Unfortunately, we also know that he has lost fantastic and qualified teachers over the past years due to low wages in the field. This is a loss for those for whom early childhood education is a passion and a field for which they are an excellent fit for and for our children who miss out on learning from such wonderful people. It is incredibly important to me that we treat early childhood educators as the professionals they are and find solutions to increase their pay.

It is my hope that LD1726, which supports efforts to invest in Maine's system of child care by advancing compensation for educators ('the workforce behind the workforce'), creating affordability for families, increasing access, and maintaining health and safety standards for children, will pass and support our state to improve the quality of life for all Maine families.