



Testimony of Erin Gray 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 Erin Gray and I am the Senior Program Director at the Boothbay Region 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 subsidy program helps the families that we serve to unload the financial burden that is put upon them; specifically, for single guardian families. We know that our families rely on childcare to make sure they can work 40 hours per week to support their families. With illness and other outside factors (play dates, extracurricular activities, sleepovers with grandparents, etc.), being reimbursed by attendance isn't as helpful. With enrollment-based reimbursement, our Y will be able to ensure that each family that relies on subsidy still has a place for their child(ren) and we will be better equipped to meet the needs of childcare on the peninsula.*

- 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 beneficial to our staff. Serving the community part-time is a difficult position to fill, and I believe that this supplement has helped retain staff. Increasing this funding would make a world of difference to them; they are individuals who work with children because they care and enjoy the type of work, but often cannot afford to do it part time. With this supplement, we've been able to retain more staff, which has been beneficial to the program. Consistency is key when it comes to working with children, and the more consistent we are with staffing, the stronger our programs are. Having strong early childhood education and before/after school programs in our community is critical. Families need a reliable place for their children to be safe, learn, grow, and become positive members of society and we could not do that without our dedicated, professional staff.*

Respectfully submitted,

Erin Gray, Senior Program Director, Boothbay Region YMCA

**Contact:** Erin Gray, Senior Program Director, Boothbay Region YMCA  
**P:** 207.633.2855 **E:** egray@brymca.org