

Testimony of Chrissie Davis
In support of
***LD 1726: An Act to Build Maine's Economy by Supporting Child Care for Working Families
sponsored by Senate President Troy Jackson***

Senator Baldacci, Representative Meyer, and distinguished members of the Health and Human Services Committee, my name is Chrissie Davis and I am a family childcare provider in Skowhegan. I currently work alone and serve 6 children under the age of 5 and 2 school-age children. Although I am licensed for 12 children, I can't afford to hire a helper to fill those extra opportunities. After filing my taxes this year, I calculated my hourly rate at \$11.33. I have been in business for 22 years and work with children 11 hours a day. After business hours my time includes trainings, meetings, record keeping, curriculum planning, activity prep, meal prep, cleaning and sanitizing. I only take 2 weeks of paid vacation per year and major holidays off. I have no retirement fund and very little savings. I just love my job.

My program is an Early Head Start partner and nationally accredited. I work hard to make sure the services I provide for children and families are high quality. Bouncing Bubbles has a Star 5 rating with Maine's Quality Rating System and is a Nature Explore Certified Outdoor Classroom. I am an appointed member of the Children's Cabinet Early Childhood Advisory Council. In addition, over the past 22 years, I have earned an AS in Early Childhood Education, Maine's Inclusion Credential, Maine's Youth Development Credential and Maine's Infant Toddler Credential. My training has earned a Level 6 on the Career Lattice with Maine Roads to Quality Professional Development Network. All of these increase my knowledge and expertise in the field of early childhood education. And I could earn more and work less hours at Cumberland Farms.

As you have probably heard by now, childcare is the workforce behind the workforce. Without reliable childcare, families can't work and that's a problem! While writing this testimony, I received a message from a mom of three children. She just learned her childcare is closing and is desperate to find childcare so she doesn't lose her job. She was in tears and I couldn't help her.

LD 1726 would, among other things, double the current monthly wage supplement to \$400/month. That would pay about half of my food costs for the month. What a help that would be! Another piece of the bill includes adjusting the child care subsidy payments to providers on an enrollment basis rather than calculating payment on the child's attendance. My income is based on a weekly fee; I cannot operate on hourly rates. That weekly fee holds their spot whether they are in attendance for 50 hours or 10 hours in any given week. The Child Care Subsidy Program must continue to reimburse providers on an enrollment basis. If they revert back to the attendance basis as was the policy before the pandemic, many providers including myself, will be forced to either cut back on the number of subsidy opportunities they provide or eliminate them altogether and only serve private pay families.

When the State of Maine needed me to remain open and risk my own health and that of my family to care for the children of essential personnel, I answered that call. My business remained open throughout the pandemic, closing just one week when I had Covid in 2022. I need the State of Maine to recognize the vital role the Early Childhood Educators of Maine play in the education of young children and support of the workforce. Please support LD 1726. Thank you.