

Testimony of Amanda Leclerc
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 Amanda Leclerc. I am a Childcare Center Director, and I live in Greene. I'm testifying in support of LD 1726 An Act to Build Maine's Economy by Supporting Child Care and Working Families.

I support raising child care educator wages because this will help attract new employees and retain current employees.

For parents and the community to understand what it actually costs to help raise and teach their children Maine needs to develop a cost model tool that better supports our understanding of what it costs to provide quality care and education.

I support raising subsidy eligibility for Maine's lower income families because there are so many Maine families that are on the line of qualifying, yet they don't. The struggle to pay for childcare and pay what the providers deserve to make is extremely difficult. This would take some of the burden off from them and would come as a huge relief.

I support ensuring that subsidy reimbursement covers days when children are absent from their program because providers still face paying employees and bills regardless of if a child is absent or not. If providers are not paid, then they will have no choice but to give the spot of the absent child to another family in order to pay the bills. With already huge waitlists and a shortage of providers this could be detrimental to families who would be at risk of losing care.

Our waitlist at our center has our next anticipated opening for August of 2024. We have over 50 children on a waitlist. We can't find employees and we can't afford the employees that do apply asking for \$20 or more per hour. We are capped at what the state will pay for childcare but are expected to pay these high rates and it doesn't add up. Childcare providers need these investments to stay afloat, which is why I support Maine developing a long term plan to increase investments in child care programs while also increasing subsidy eligibility.

I support providing funding to pay for child care for child care employees because this is a huge benefit to childcare employees while taking some burden off providers who currently offer this benefit but are struggling to pay employees and could use that income to give a higher wage.

I support shortened time periods for determining subsidy eligibility because most centers are already waitlisted for months, so when an opening occurs then that family who has already been waiting would need to add another 6-8 weeks before starting in the open position so that subsidy can be approved. Childcare openings are far and few between, so anything to make that process of starting quicker for families will help everyone in the long run.

I support shortened time periods for child care programs receiving subsidy reimbursement because we as providers need to be paid for the quality care we provide. When payments are late then the financial strain falls back on our shoulders. Getting reimbursement sooner would relieve added stress between payments periods.

Please vote in support of LD 1726,
Amanda Leclerc