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Testimony of Meg Helming 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 Meg Helming and I'm the COO of the YMCA Alliance of Northern New England, which represents the 15 YMCAs in Maine. I am also a parent of two young children. 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.

Many of my YMCA colleagues have submitted testimony in support of this bill from a childcare provider lens. Today, I stand before you as a parent of two young children, struggling to navigate a care system that simply cannot meet my family's needs. Due to systemic challenges in the early childhood education sector, I feel like I am counting down the days until my children turn five so they can go to public school and my husband and I can get out from under the financial and logistical burden of maintaining childcare. My husband and I pay \$566 per week for childcare – that is nearly \$29,000 per year. My experience is not an anomaly. The average cost for childcare in Maine is \$10,000 - \$15,000 per child per year. To say that this puts an incredible strain on families is an understatement. To be clear: I love my children's childcare provider; my kids are thriving there. But securing and maintaining the care has been incredibly stressful, and the cost is crushing. This isn't fair or sustainable for my family, or any of the families that are struggling at no fault of their own.

The childcare system desperately needs significant and sustained public investment to meet the needs of Maine families like mine. I urge you to vote ought to pass on LD 1726.

Respectfully submitted,

Meg Helming  
YMCA Alliance of Northern New England

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