



CITY OF CARIBOU, MAINE

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May 9, 2023

Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services
Senator Joseph Baldacci, Chair
Representative Michele Meyer, Chair
C/O Legislative Information Office
100 State House Station
Augusta, Maine 04333

Re: Letter of Support for LD 1726, An Act to Build Maine's Economy by Supporting Child Care for Working Families

Dear Senator Baldacci and Representative Meyer and distinguished committee members:

I am not only the City Manager for the City of Caribou, but it has also been my home for over 31 years. I consider it a true blessing to have watched the children of our community grow up, further their education, start careers, get married and commence living fulfilling and happy lives here in central Aroostook County. I watch with joy as these young couples became parents. I am delighted when I am introduced to the next generation of citizens!

For many, parenthood can be stressful with the new demands on the family budget, time pressures and trying to prove your head is still in work mode when on the job. This seems to cause further anxiety and marital strain at a time that should be the blissful years of their 20s and 30s. What I have observed is that newlyweds often change career fields, delay starting a family, or leave the full-time work force because adequate childcare is not accessible. By supporting our childcare professionals, we help build families and our workforce.

Caribou currently has more high-quality options than many neighboring towns with a mix of in-home providers and centers. I met many at a September 15, 2022, forum in Caribou. These educators spoke of the challenge to simply stay open and thrive in the profession they love while navigating a system which seemingly makes it impossible to operate a viable business caring for the youngest members of our community. They care for the kids and know their work is essential, is it right to take advantage of their passion for this work?

Caribou is a community that takes pride in our schools, our hospital, our government services, and most of all – our network of hard-working small businesses that include family farms, service trades, outdoor recreation economy, and the best hospitality industry in the County. One common denominator – they need workers, and workers need daycare. Please help keep the doors open in our community and others by assisting our childcare professionals.

Thank you, Senator Jackson, and co-sponsor Representative Terry, and committee members for recognizing that this is an important issue facing the State of Maine. Please reach out anytime with questions: (207) 493 – 5961 (my direct line) or pthompson@cariboumaine.org.

Sincerely,

Penny Thompson, City Manager