

Testimony of Colleen Pasqualini
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 Colleen Pasqualini. I am an accountant and a parent, and I live in Scarborough. 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 we are a two income household and greatly depend on our child care educators/providers. My children spend more time with them than me during the week and I highly value having educators that are experienced, knowledgeable, and resourceful. I know that my husband are struggling to purchase a home and I can imagine that our providers are also dealing with similar struggles. I support all of us earning a wage that we can support ourselves in this inflationary economy.

I support Maine developing a cost model tool that better supports our understanding of what it costs to provide quality care and education because information can only be more helpful to provide more informed decisions. The economy has been so rapidly changing these last few years. I think it's important to understand the ramifications of how this is truly effecting these systems that have no room to absorb these fluctuations.

I support raising subsidy eligibility for Maine's lower income families because it cannot be overstated enough, the economy is extremely difficult at this moment. Housing is unaffordable, grocery costs have risen, gas has risen, every basic staple cost of living day to day has risen and that is affecting all families.

I support ensuring that subsidy reimbursement covers days when children are absent from their program because if a child is absent, it does not lower the cost of operating the program. The program still needs to be open, have the staff available for the ratio of children that could be there that day. All of the families depend on the child care program being open. Could there be a food credit for the day but allow reimbursement for the staff and facility instead?

I support Maine developing a long term plan to increase investments in child care programs while also increasing subsidy eligibility because our children are our future. If you look at the news and listen to the adults disputing unintelligible opinions that are divisive and disruptive and upsetting. We owe it to our children to do better and to provide them with a safe environment that will foster their growth. Investing in education is the best investment we as a society can make.

I support providing funding to pay for child care for child care employees because they have families too. If they can't work because their wages can't support paying child care costs themselves, then all of our families are affected. It becomes a snowball affect. We moved here to Maine in 2021 and could not find childcare for my 2 year old. It took a full year for a spot to open up because so many facilities had waiting lists and so many facilities had closed. It was so disruptive and stressful. I was working all night so that I could take care of my son during the day. I couldn't afford to not work.

I support shortened time periods for child care programs receiving subsidy reimbursement because childcare programs need to pay their costs timely including wages, food costs, supplies. The sooner they receive their subsidy reimbursement, the better. It is difficult for any business to float the costs for such large expenses for any length of time.

Please vote in support of LD 1726,
Colleen Pasqualini