



Testimony to the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs
in support of
LD 1799, An Act to Expand Maine's High-quality Early Learning and Care for Children by Increasing Public
Preschool Opportunities in Communities

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Dear Senator Rafferty, Representative Brennan, and honorable members of the Committee:

My name is Amy Winston and I live in Edgcomb. I am testifying in support of LD 1799 on behalf of Coastal Enterprises, Inc. (CEI). CEI is a nonprofit community development corporation (CDC) and community development finance institution (CDFI). CEI works to build a just, vibrant, and climate-resilient future for people and communities in Maine and other rural regions. We do this by integrating finance, business expertise and policy solutions to make the economy work more equitably.

For 46 years, CEI has provided specialized financing and free, sector-specific advice on starting a childcare business, expanding licensed capacity, or transitioning a business to a new childcare provider. During this time, we have loaned \$13 million to more than 200 family- and center-based childcare business start-ups, including for- and non-profit businesses and cooperatives, that have created or retained over 7,200 childcare slots. Our accrued expertise in this industry has helped care entrepreneurs navigate the challenges and opportunities that are unique to this sector to improve their profitability and long-term business viability, to create and maintain childcare slots and quality jobs, and enable more parents to work full time or return to school.

In 2020, CEI created the Child Care Business Lab (CCBL), a 6-month group-based program that provides entrepreneurs with the tools they need to open a successful business, from small business start-up education to childcare management instruction and coaching through the licensing process. Our current class includes 3 cohorts: a family childcare group, a facility or center-based childcare group and a group of English language learners. To date, 16 Mainers have opened financially sustainable childcare businesses serving over 330 children and enabling 69 parents to start full time jobs.

CEI envisions a childcare industry where childcare providers are educators who are paid a living wage and there is high-quality, affordable care available to every Maine child under age 5. To advance this vision, we partner with the State Office of Child and Family Services, Maine Roads to Quality Professional Development Network, Maine Association for the Education of Young Children and Family Child Care Association of Maine to strengthen the childcare ecosystem. We advocate for pragmatic solutions that reduce barriers to delivering high-quality care and to expand opportunities for people in Maine who are interested in owning their own childcare business.

CEI applauds the work the Department of Education and Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Child and Family Services have been doing to provide parents with choices for publicly funded pre-K that include licensed childcare providers. LD 1799 proposes a pragmatic process for developing a plan to expand integration of childcare, including family-based care, into public education to provide flexible and affordable options for working families while assuring high-quality care and education by streamlining funding and coordinating professional development and credentialing for early childhood educators. Once implemented, with future funding this initiative will promote full day options that



expand opportunities for childcare providers to collaborate with school systems and lay the groundwork for publicly funded childcare. We would like to thank Senator Vitelli and the sponsors for bringing this bill forward. We feel it elevates and aligns work that is underway in the Departments of Education and Health and Human Services for the benefit of consumers. CEI supports LD 1799. Thank you for considering our testimony.