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*Testimony of Rep. Rebecca Millett supporting*

## **LD 1726, An Act to Build Maine's Economy by Supporting Child Care for Working Families**

*Before the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services*

Good morning, Senator Baldacci, Representative Meyer and honorable members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services. My name is Rebecca Millett, and I represent House District 123, which makes up most of Cape Elizabeth. Thank you for the opportunity to come before you as a cosponsor in support of **LD 1726, An Act to Build Maine's Economy by Supporting Child Care for Working Families**. I am grateful to Senate President Jackson for bringing this bill forward.

Quality, affordable and accessible child care is critical to supporting early development, which we know is the foundation to ensuring that kids will thrive both now and later in life. Research shows that these early years are a period of incredible growth, and when we fail to provide children with the support and services they need, we miss a significant opportunity.

Access to child care is also an economic imperative. Parents cannot participate fully in our workforce when they do not have child care, and many parents – mostly women – are forced to leave the workforce entirely to care for young children. The Maine Development Foundation's Measures of Growth report calls our state's labor force participation rate an economic "red flag" and highlights increasing access to child care as a way to improve it.<sup>1</sup> At a time when businesses across the state are struggling to fill positions – and, frankly, families across the state are struggling to make ends meet, from an economic perspective, this is a problem we cannot afford to ignore.

LD 1726 seeks to tackle the issue head on. It provides much-needed funding to support families and child care providers alike. It also improves stakeholder input and begins the process of creating a roadmap to a future where all Maine families can access the highest quality child care at an affordable cost.

Thank you for your consideration.

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<sup>1</sup> Maine Development Foundation 2022 Measures of Growth: [www.mdf.org/measures-of-growth/labor-force-participation/](http://www.mdf.org/measures-of-growth/labor-force-participation/)