

Melissa Cilley
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LD 1726

My name is Melissa Cilley and I live in Portland. I currently serve as the Chair of the Board of Directors for Youth and Family Outreach.

I am the mother of three adult children and a former early educator. I remember well how, when I was working as a preschool teacher in my 20's, one of my parents asked me "why would someone as bright and motivated as you do childcare?" The comment shook me to my core. Before long, I was ALSO questioning "why?" I wondered why the job was less valued than other jobs. I wondered if I could stay in it when I could hardly pay my rent (even way back then.) I wondered why my family told me my career choice would be "fine for now -- while you are young." Not surprisingly, I left the field in a few short years and not much has changed in the decades since. Now, **THE TIME HAS FINALLY COME TO RECOGNIZE EARLY EDUCATORS FOR THE CRITICAL ROLE THEY PLAY IN OUR ECONOMY AND IN OUR EDUCATIONAL SYSTEMS.** The time has come to finally recognize these educators as professionals, paying and supporting them accordingly.

I am writing today to ask you to please support Senator Troy Jackson's bill, LD 1726. In doing so, you will help ensure that our state's most important asset - our children - receive the quality care they deserve (and require) through educators that are compensated equitably for the immense value they provide, without escalating costs to inaccessible levels for families.