

Testimony of Sarah Lavallee,
In support of LD 1726 “An Act To Build Maine’s Economy by Supporting Child Care and
Working Families”
May 10, 2023

Hello Senator Baldacci, Representative Meyer, and distinguished members of the Health and Human Services Committee, my name is Sarah Lavallee, I live in Vassalboro, and I work as a Program Director at the Kennebec Valley Community Action Program (KVCAP). I have spent my career working in and advocating for the early childhood field.

I support LD 1726 because we all benefit when young children have access to high quality childcare options so children have a strong foundation for their future growth and learning, and their parents can achieve their work and school goals. In order to have a robust workforce in our state, parents need childcare. And in order for childcare programs, teachers and providers to survive in this field, they need to be paid fairly for the important role they play.

I have lived in Maine all my life and I have dedicated my career to supporting our youngest Mainer’s to achieve their fullest potential. Working closely with childcare providers in different forums and through various relationships, I see the struggles they face in running a financially sustainable business. In my work, we partner with a small number of providers in our HomeStart model, bringing supports and resources to them through an Early Head Start-Child Care Partnership grant. I have heard from providers that if we had not been partnering together, they would have closed their doors. Many programs in different parts of the state have had to make this difficult decision to close, and it is devastating for families in need of childcare! As a State, we need to allocate more resources to assure that our youngest citizens get the start they deserve with qualified and nurturing childcare providers who are earning a viable wage. The increased monthly wage supplements proposed here would create progress in this area. Assuring consistent payments to providers is another area that needs ongoing focus. Providers cannot budget and plan for their program when their paycheck depends on how many days a child attends versus the slot they are reserving for that child. Providers are making every effort to offer a quality service for children and families in their communities, but we know that resources in the early childhood field are limited. Providers try to do a lot with very little, and a Cost of Care Model would allow the state to take a closer look at wages, salaries, benefits, and costs associated with operating a childcare. We need to take these steps to better support early care and education in our state, therefore your support for LD 1726 is critical.

Thank you for your time,
Sarah Lavallee