



It is the mission of the Waldo County YMCA to promote the physical, mental, social, and spiritual health of Waldo County children and families.

FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT®
FOR HEALTHY LIVING
FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

February 15, 2024

Testimony of Russell Werkman before
the Committee on Health and Human Services
in support of

LD 2199: An Act To Ensure Subsidy Reimbursements And Emergency Financial Assistance For Certain Child Care Providers

February 20, 2024

Senator Baldacci, Representative Meyer, and honorable members of the Committee on Health and Human Services, my name is Russell Werkman and I am the CEO of the Waldo County YMCA. I support LD 2199: *An Act To Ensure Subsidy Reimbursements And Emergency Financial Assistance For Certain Child Care Providers*.

Collectively, the 15 YMCAs in Maine are the largest childcare provider in the state. We serve thousands of children in our early childhood education programs, before/afterschool programs, and summer camp. These programs provide children with safe, nurturing and enriching care, and are a critical component of our state's infrastructure to support working parents and our economy.

The shift from attendance-based to enrollment-based reimbursement for childcare subsidy is an important step in making this critical program work for families and providers. Enrollment-based reimbursement is a more stable and sustainable funding mechanism for providers, meaning we will be better equipped to meet the needs of our communities.

The current reimbursement system incentivizes us to limit the slots available to low-income families. Over the past decade or so, we have offered help to families to fill out the paper required for these subsidies. In Waldo County, convincing families to work through the application is a hurdle. Once a family is accepted, we guarantee them that spot. We commit to paying staff and overhead for that spot. If we must lose money because we are not taking in the full cost of the spot, it incentivizes us to look for other children. That's not how we want to exist in our community.

In addition, the current system requires detailed attendance logs, which adds extra stress to a staff that is already stretched thin. We have a wonderful staff that wants to focus on making the environment safe and engaging for children, not spend lots of time filling out forms.

The current system makes it less financially appealing to take requiring detailed attendance logs adds extra stresses to a staff that is already stretched thin.

WALDO COUNTY YMCA

157 Lincolville Avenue, Belfast, Maine 04915
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If we were confident that we would be reimbursed based on enrollment, it would add an extra incentive to reach out to low-income families and shepherd them through the application process.

This bill also establishes an emergency fund for childcare providers to help providers meet an urgent need to support their operations and continue serving families. We see this as an important lifeline for providers that are meeting a critical community need but forced to operate with razor-thin margins. This important support could mean the difference between a program closing its doors permanently or remaining open to serve families.

Respectfully submitted,

Russell Werkman, CEO
Waldo County YMCA

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