

Testimony of Janet Chasse
In support of
LD 2199: An Act to Ensure Subsidy Reimbursements and Emergency Financial Assistance for Certain Child Care Providers
sponsored by Senate President Troy Jackson

Senator Baldacci, Representative Meyer, and distinguished members of the Health and Human Services Committee, my name is Janet Chasse. I am a gift shop owner and child care substitute, and I live in Greenville. I'm testifying in support of LD 2199: An Act to Ensure Subsidy Reimbursements and Emergency Financial Assistance for Certain Child Care Providers.

I have been working with child care in Greenville for the last two years, assisting with a non profit board to create more and sustainable child care. I came into this with many years of experience, having owned a child care center licensed for 40 children. When I joined with this group, it quickly became apparent that the only way it could survive is as a non profit. The whole town stepped up in rehabbing the only space available to us, the snowmobile clubhouse. We are limited there to 20 children because the water is not municipal. We then began to operate at the school for 20 more children, school age, and are helping with another group, through the Town of Greenville, to cover after school care for the preschoolers. We are in the process of setting up another space for infant care. Our Moosehead Caring for Kids Foundation was awarded 1.6 million to build new childcare space. We are in the process of raising additional money for that, and going out to bid shortly. Then everyone will be under the same roof, the space will accommodate up to 80 children.

Operating these child care spaces requires a lot of volunteers, donations, and strict rules for the parents. They must pay for all the days they contract for, whether or not they use them. If we allowed them not to pay on the days something comes up, we wouldn't be able to pay our staff, rent, operation costs. We fill every day we have, and still have kids on a waiting list. In the beginning, I even had to lend the childcare \$2,000 to help meet payroll. But our board is determined to make this work, and we have some very appreciative parents who want to work. A consistent income from tuition is key for us to keep our doors open.

Yes, we run on razor thin margins for our child care operations. We've been lucky in that the bigger issues have been taken care of by donations and volunteers. We've been given a new refrigerator, had to have a septic system dug up in the winter, and have doors replaced. We still have so much good will in the community, but it gets harder to ask. If we had a program that we could turn to in an emergency, it would be less of a burden on the community.

Please vote in support of LD 2199.