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LD 2199

Testimony of Deborah Arcaro, Before the Health & Human Services Committee, in support of LD 2199 - An Act to Ensure Subsidy Reimbursements and Emergency Financial Assistance for Certain Child Care Providers

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Senator Baldacci, Representative Meyer, and honorable members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services, my name is Deborah Arcaro and I am providing testimony today as a retired family child care provider. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in favor of LD 2199.

There is no question that if parents of young children can't go to work, it impacts employers, our communities, and our economy. A sustainable child care system is very important in meeting workforce needs across Maine. I feel that Maine's Child Care Affordability Program (CCAP) is an important part of the overall system through the financial support it provided for families in affording child care. Of concern for me is the fact that the only CCAP really only works if child care providers opt in. CCAP can have all the money in the world to help families pay for care, but if no providers contract with them there ends up being no care available.

LD 2199 caught my attention because it appears to work to address a major drawback I know providers have about participation in CCAP. That drawback is that providers only get paid when child receive direct care. That goes against how myself and many of my professional peers structure fee payment for our small businesses. I approached my fee from the point that I offered a contracted service for an education and care opportunity to individual families. They agreed to pay for the opportunity available to them. If they choose not to use my services during the contracted times, that was their choice, but I was available, so payment was made. With CCAP paying for attendance, I would have to be available, but if a family didn't use the available service, I would be the one who lost out financially. Why would I contract with CCAP under that scenario when I could fill the same slot with clients under my normal fee agreement? Even a small business that budgets following the 85% capacity ideal isn't sustainable with an irregular loss of income that cannot be planned for.

CCAP has the funding, so the question for me becomes how to engage more child care providers in accepting CCAP? CCAP could start by paying for enrollment, not attendance. Add this to better disbursement of information to the public about changes in income eligibility which should lead to more families asking providers to participate in CCAP.

Having been a licensed family child care provider for 33 years I know first hand the scramble that many families go through to find child care, never mind affordable child care. I am asking you to support LD 2199 as I believe it would be a positive step in making it economically possible for programs to contract to offer care under CCAP.

Maine's children and families need a strong, sustainable child care system. Without those child care programs, parents cannot work. Without workers, our state and local economies suffer. CCAP is a program with the potential of supporting more families in affording quality child care and being part of Maine's needed workforce.

Thank you for your time and attention.