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Testimony of Casey Clark Kelley 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 Casey Clark Kelley and I'm CEO for the Central Lincoln County YMCA, an organization that serves hundreds of children daily. 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/after school 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 sustainability of our YMCA depends on reliable income. Our early education childcare program operates at an approximate \$40,000 operating loss so every dollar that doesn't come in is an additional dollar we need to fundraise for, just to close budget. Attendance-based reimbursement means this a constant variable we're managing. Enrollment-based reimbursement would allow us to budget appropriately. We are hoping to expand our capacity to serve more children, as our waitlist is over 100 children long, but that also means we're expanding our operating loss, and will need to make considerations on how to serve more kids without jeopardizing the health of our organization. The more funding we have to support this essential service, the more we can support families.

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. Continuous care is critical to the health of our communities and often the ability to serve families comes down to lack of funding. With an emergency fund we could continue to provide childcare services during times of emergent need. 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,


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