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Senator Rotundo, Representative Sachs, Senator Baldacci, Representative Meyer and members of the Appropriations and Financial Affairs and Health and Human Services Committees, my name is Miriam Jacobs and I am the Family Engagement Manager at Kennebec Valley Community Action Agency Child and family Services department as well as a concerned grandparent. I live in Canaan.

I am asking you to reject the following child care initiatives in the Supplemental budget:

Reducing funding by recognizing one-time General Fund savings for monthly wage supplements for all child care workers due to the October 25, 2023 effective date of Public Law 2023, chapter 412. It is imperative that funding allocated to the child care wage supplement program be carried through to ensure full implementation for the remainder of the fiscal year as early childhood educators continue to improve on their professional development and achieve higher paying tiers. If this funding is reduced, there is a risk of having to lower the wage tiers hurting child care educator's paychecks.

Reducing funding on a one-time basis due to the delayed implementation of changes to income eligibility for child care subsidies in the Child Care Affordability Program enacted in Public Law 2023, chapter 412, Part VVV.

Families were promised this expansion would begin on January 1st, 2024 through the law passed by this legislature and again in a press release issued by the Governor. To backtrack on the progress of this initiative is ignoring the continued challenges families face in affording and accessing child care and is mute to the ongoing child care crisis in your communities. Reducing funding by recognizing one-time savings for child care staff in the Maine Child Care Affordability Program due to delaying implementation until fiscal year 2024-25. Child care programs and educators have been anticipating the start of this program as intended in law and NOT a time limited, piloted program. This is a promising step forward in recruiting and retaining the child care

workforce. Every day we delay this program, more child care educators leave the field. The Legislature did the hard work to ensure this recruitment and retention strategy to build back the child care educator workforce and the proposal to delay in the budget sends a message that educators needs go unheard.

If Maine is to make good on a promise the Legislature made to address the child care crisis, then please reject these initiatives and send the message that we will move forward as a state and attend to the needs of young children, their families, and this incredible workforce behind the workforce.

Please allow me to share my son's and his wife's story. They are a family of 4 with two young children (2 years and 9 months). Dad works as a truck driver for a local beer distributor and Mom at a childcare/Head Start/Pre-K program in Waterville (Educare). As a young family they value the need for high quality education for their children and were fortunate to secure private pay slots for their first child at Educare. They were not income eligible for a child care subsidy. Their second child was born in May and the family spent a lot of time and energy to determine if mom should return to work or not as the cost of child care for 2 children was so much. The family of 4 now was now barely over the Child Care subsidy guidelines. The family learned of this upcoming support for Maine families as well as child care workers to support early educators and the work force, and Mom decided to continue in the career she loved and pay for both children in care which was roughly \$460 of her weekly paycheck!! Imagine that, her take home weekly pay was now decreased to around \$200. As time went on and these initiatives were becoming promised she continued to balance her situation knowing there was hope on the horizon for her family. These hopes are dwindling, deadlines come and go, and there are never answers to any of their questions. This is not OK! Although I am sharing about this family's

experiences they are not alone. Here at KVCAP we have many other childcare staff waiting for this support and threatening to leave the field if this is not resolved and implemented soon. It will not be cost effective for families to work, especially in the field of early care. These families and children deserve better and what has been promised to them. Positive Action must happen now.