

Sarah Duncan
United Way of Aroostook
LD 209

Senator Rotundo, Representative Gattine, Senator Ingwersen, Representative Meyer and members of the Appropriations and Financial Affairs and Health and Human Services Committees, my name is Sarah Duncan, and I am the Executive Director of United Way of Aroostook.

I am writing to you today to urge you to support the language change necessary to approve all eligible families for the Child Care Affordability Program funding.

Additionally, I encourage the Committee to consider providing increased funding to address the current shortfall in Maine's Child Care Affordability Program and the Child Care Employer Award. As it stands, over 170 families are on the waitlist for the Child Care Affordability Program, and more than 400 child care employees are waiting for the Child Care Employment Award, which helps them pay for their own care so they can continue to work in this vital industry.

United Way of Aroostook has made childcare a top priority for our three-year strategic plan which led to the development of the Aroostook County Childcare Resource Center. Our data from the Asset Limited Income Constrained Employed (ALICE) research demonstrates that child care remains one of the highest Survival Budget costs for households with children.

Data shows that 30% of households in Maine are within the ALICE threshold and 12% are below the federal poverty level. Aroostook County has an even greater need, with 46% of households falling below the ALICE threshold. When looking at families with children, single-parent households are the most likely to fall below the ALICE threshold with almost 74% of single female-headed households and 54% of single male-headed households falling below the threshold.

The new CCAP income guidelines have increased to capture our ALICE families, however, without fully funding the program, we are not actually supporting the families in need. Families below the ALICE threshold reported cutting work hours (40%), taking unpaid leave (35%) or supervising children while working (24%) when child care is closed, unavailable or unaffordable. It is necessary to fully fund CCAP to once again eliminate the waiting list and provide these parents with the support they are eligible for.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sarah Duncan
Executive Director
United Way of Aroostook

Learn more about ALICE:

United For ALICE, Maine <https://www.unitedforalice.org/state-overview/maine>
ALICE in the crosscurrents: An Update on Financial Hardship in Maine. May 2024