



### **Testimony of the Maine Chapter of Mother Forward**

*LD 210, An Act for Making Unified Appropriations and Allocations from the General Fund and Other Funds for the Expenditures of State Government and to Change Certain Provisions of the Law Necessary to the Proper Operations of State Government for the Fiscal Years Ending June 30, 2025, June 30, 2026 and June 30, 2027*

### **In Opposition of Certain Initiatives Relating to Childcare Funding February 24, 2025**

Senators Rotundo and Ingwersen, Representatives Gattine and Meyer, and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs and the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services, my name is Jade Lebel and I am submitting testimony on behalf of the Maine Chapter of Mother Forward. I am testifying in opposition to some of the proposed budget cuts for childcare.

The proposed budget cuts \$30 million worth of stipends from childcare staff. On average, this would bring childcare staff salaries down \$4,000. The reason that this is so alarming is because childcare facilities are already struggling to stay fully staffed. My daughter was in daycare for 2.5 years, and in that time, she had nearly 10 different childcare teachers due to staff turnover. Being a childcare provider takes hard work and dedication, yet they are underpaid and oftentimes not well-respected.

These proposed budget cuts would likely cause more childcare workers to leave the profession, resulting in childcare facilities being forced to close classrooms, and in some cases, entire facilities. Affordable and accessible childcare is already hard to come by in the state. One of the members of the Maine Chapter of Mother Forward had her twins on a waitlist for 18 months before they were finally awarded a spot. When I became a stay at home mom in June of 2023 due to the high cost of childcare prices, I was told by our daycare provider that if I changed my mind and wanted to send my kids back, that the waitlist was over 100 children long. If more childcare facilities are forced to close due to this funding cut, the problem is only going to get worse than it already is, and is going to force more people out of their jobs in order to take care of their children. Affordable and accessible childcare is necessary for a functioning economy.

The proposed budget also cuts \$5 million from a scholarship program designed to help childcare workers pay for their own children to go to childcare. Again, cutting this funding will likely result in childcare workers leaving the profession. Before I left work, I was an elementary school teacher. Childcare for my two children was going to be over \$30,000 a year. This would have left me with \$100 in my weekly paycheck as a Masters level professional with seven years of experience. Without this scholarship program, in many cases, it won't make sense for childcare workers to continue in the profession.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak today, and share the concerns that myself, many other parents, and childcare providers across the state share. We urge you to not cut funding to childcare -Maine's childcare providers and children are too important.