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FOR HEALTHY LIVING
FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

Testimony of TATYANA CHILDRESS before
the Committee On Appropriations and Financial Affairs and
the Committee on Health and Human Services
in opposition to
LD 210, the Governor's proposed Biennial Budget

February 13, 2025

Senator Rotundo, Representative Gattine, Senator Ingwersen, and Representative Meyer and distinguished members of the Committees On Appropriations and Financial Affairs and Health and Human Services, my name is Tatyana Childress and I'm a Lead Preschool teacher in the Enrichment Program at the Bath Area Family YMCA. I am very concerned about the budget cuts to two critical initiatives that help stabilize the childcare sector by investing in our educators:

- Elimination of the Childcare Employment Award program (current investment of \$2.5 million per year) that helps childcare educators pay for their own childcare
- Cutting in half the Childcare Worker Stipends from \$30 million year to \$15 million per year.

As both of these programs are currently utilizing all their available funding, these cuts would have a significant negative impact on our field. Our workforce is critical to provide safe, reliable, quality care for Maine children so their parents can work.

I have utilized both the salary stipend and the Childcare Employment Award program to support my own children and their educational needs. In a field that is already severely underpaid for the amount of work involved, this would also undercut the extremely important job of setting up our next generation for success. Early childhood development, especially the ages ranging from three to five, have been clinically shown to be a critical stage for outlining a child's path in life. This stipend has not only allowed me to continue to help shape so many children's lives in a positive direction, but has greatly helped stem the tide of workforce loss in a profession wrought with a very high turnover rate. My passion for early childhood education for my children, as well as all the children in my care every day, is genuine, and should be properly compensated. Hiring qualified early childhood educators is crucial to keeping the field growing strong and supporting young minds. Being supported in this way will help ensure that we are able to continue this gravely important mission, and I hope you take the time to consider what is truly a top priority in the future of our society as we know it.

I urge you to oppose these harmful budget cuts.

Contact: Tatyana Childress, Bath Area Family YMCA
E: tatyana@bathymca.org