



FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT®
FOR HEALTHY LIVING
FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

Testimony of Leslie Wicks 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 10, 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 Leslie Wicks and I am a director of a food education program at the CLC 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.

- **Retaining reliable, qualified childcare staff is crucial for creating the best possible environment for children to learn, grow, and thrive in. Without these programs, current and future staff would look for jobs elsewhere leaving a strain and deficit in, what already is, a challenging and demanding field.**
- **My husband works in childcare and the stipends in place allow for him to continue working in the field. If they go away, he will need to find work that comes closer to paying a living wage and it will not be in childcare.**
- **Staff turnovers and vacancies will create inequities for the children I teach. Our childcare program feeds children 3 nutritious meals a day and without reliable staffing, children in my community could go hungry.**
- **As a mother who works full time, I rely on a stable childcare program to provide work for myself and a safe space for the children I teach(as well as my own children).**

I urge you to oppose these harmful budget cuts.