

Annika Ericsson
Portland
LD 210

Senator Rotundo, Representative Gattine, Senator Ingwersen, Representative Meyer, and distinguished members of the Appropriations and Financial Affairs Committee and Health and Human Services Committee, my name is Annika Ericsson. I am a preschool teacher and live in Portland.

I am opposed to the proposed \$15 million annual/\$30 million biennial cuts to the Child Care Wage Supplement Program. This drastic cut would directly impact my ability to work in early childhood education due to the fact that jobs in this field are already underfunded and we rely and appreciate heavily the monthly stipend to support the high cost of living in southern Maine. Without this stipend my future as an early childhood educator is in jeopardy as it will not pay enough to support the cost of living and I will have to seek a different field of work.

I am opposed to the proposed \$3.6 million annual/\$7.2 million biennial cuts to general funds for Head Start. Cutting these funds from head start programs will significantly and negatively impact the quality early childhood programs available to families and will also result in fewer educators working in head start programs, which will be detrimental to children's access to early education.

I am opposed to the proposed \$2.5 million annually/\$5 million biennial cuts and elimination of the Child Care Employment Award. Individuals who work in child care do not make nearly enough to support sending their own children to child care programs. To cut funding to this award is to deny someone who works hard caring for others' children each day the same right for their own children to have access to a safe and educational childcare environment. Given the extreme cost of childcare today and the low childcare employee salary, this award is absolutely necessary to bridge the gap.