

Meredith Keukelaar
Westbrook
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 Meredith Keukelaar. I am a preschool teacher and live in Westbrook.

I am opposed to the proposed \$15 million annual/\$30 million biennial cuts to the Child Care Wage Supplement Program. With the heavy increase in living costs and an inability to move out of the area due to safety concerns as an LGBT+ individual, I rely heavily on the subsidy I receive as a child care worker. Having that cut from my budget is the equivalent of an unpaid heat or electric bill, a week of groceries, or a month of diapers for my child. Even halving what I currently receive would impact me greatly.

I am opposed to the proposed \$3.6 million annual/\$7.2 million biennial cuts to general funds for Head Start. My son received services through the Head Start program and had to deal with long waiting lists that could have been the difference between him learning to talk before 3 and him not learning to talk until close to 5. I work with children who benefit from these programs daily and would hate to see more families end up in the same position due to a lack of funding to create more spots for kids in need.

I am opposed to the proposed \$2.5 million annually/\$5 million biennial cuts and elimination of the Child Care Employment Award. I am one of the lucky recipients of this award who isn't on the 400+ person waiting list. Before, the subsidy program only covered \$100 a week of my child's daycare, and I was still paying \$136 each week to the school. Saving over \$500 a month has been the reason I have not had to look for a job outside of childcare just to afford to have my daughter go to school while I work in the same building. It would be a huge financial blow to lose the award after only having it a few months. This award helped me afford to pay off the back pay I had incurred trying to keep up with the subsidy payments. It isn't repetitive as the governor claims as the subsidy doesn't fully cover all the costs for most childcare workers and we still end up with a financial burden to do our work when we rely on it.