

Beth Gagnon  
Old Orchard Beach  
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 Beth Gagnon. I am a Preschool Teacher & Childcare center Administrator and live in Old Orchard Beach.

I am opposed to the proposed \$15 million annual/\$30 million biennial cuts to the Child Care Wage Supplement Program. Childcare providers do not earn enough to pay the bills, even someone who has been in the field for over 20 years, has earned credentials, and works in administration along with a classroom. This makes the field hard to stay in unless you take on multiple jobs or have a spouse who can support your calling. We learned so much during the pandemic about the value of Early Education and care, but this change would send a clear message to those of us in the field that we are not valued, and that we are little more than babysitters.

I am opposed to the proposed \$3.6 million annual/\$7.2 million biennial cuts to general funds for Head Start. Cutting support to those most in need, while prices of everything are going up, is asking those teachers (who already don't make enough) to support their classrooms themselves. It's also telling families/children that they don't matter. I don't believe that's how Mainers truly feel. In the end, it will cost more because of the extra supports and remediation those who slip through the cracks will require.

I am opposed to the proposed \$2.5 million annually/\$5 million biennial cuts and elimination of the Child Care Employment Award. With the wages childcare providers earn, having to then pay tuition for your own children, often forces quality teachers out of the field. It leaves the field with lots of turnover, an unbalance of new/barely qualified providers with not enough veteran teachers who have been able to stick it out. This starts a cycle of burn out for those veteran teachers which leads to more leaving the field. This leaves us with an unhealthy, unstable work environment.