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Testimony of The Child Care Teaching Staff of the Penbay YMCA 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 24, 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, we are the Child Care Teaching Staff of the Penbay YMCA. We are 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.

**-The field of early childhood education is predominantly led by women.** We at the Penbay YMCA have a handful of mothers on staff, and more that may choose to start a family one day. With the cost of living rising regularly, so does the need for work. There is a necessity for more two income households. The need for child care is inevitable, and the Child Care Employment Act aids directly in the cost. We should not have to choose between working in a field we love, or starting a family in fear we will not be able to afford care. When you cut funding such as this, you are telling these teachers that their own children do not matter, or matter less, when the opposite is true. Our children are important members of the same community their parents are helping to educate and shape. The Child Care Employment Act is something that has been proven successful, necessary, and should continue.

**The Salary Stipend Program is something in which every single person in our center benefits.** Our center has just finally settling from a large turnover, and teaching teams are developed and consistent! This is a comfort for teachers, children, and their families. That's in jeopardy with the stipend supplement program getting slashed, as teachers will look for other job opportunities that pay more, and are often, outside of the field altogether. There will be major backlash, and it may not be seen or felt right away, but it will trickle into highly skilled teachers leaving the field, leaving people in charge of settings with little to no experience in early learning development, including special needs and inclusion.

**The Stipend Salary Program balances what teachers personally invest,** as we sometimes pay for our own materials. It makes us feel valued and acknowledged when we go above and beyond to continue training, including student loans, to stay informed of the latest developments of our field. It helps to offset costs of living, while making us feel seen and supported to make early education not only a temporary stepping stone, but our careers. **For us, this is our chosen path.** I urge you to oppose these harmful budget cuts.

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