

Chrissie Davis  
Skowhegan  
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, I am opposed to the proposed \$15 million annual/\$30 million biennial cuts to the Child Care Wage Supplement Program.

Childcare was not my dream career.

My name is Chrissie Davis and I have been a Family Child Care provider for almost 24 years. When I was downsized from my position at Sappi Fine Paper in Skowhegan, I determined that working from home would be ideal as my son was too old for childcare himself, but not yet responsible enough to be home alone. So I decided to take in some children to create an income for myself. Little did I know the world that I was entering! I became licensed and started taking trainings from Maine Roads to Quality. Through these trainings, I came to understand that early childhood education is a real thing! This is a career and a very important one.

Over the years, I have earned an Associate degree in Early Childhood Education, a Child Development Associate Credential and three of Maine's credentials: Inclusion Credential, Youth Development Credential and Infant Toddler Credential. Currently I am working on the new Family Child Care Credential and have contracted with Maine Roads to Quality Professional Development Network to lead cohorts to help other providers earn this credential as well. My program has been nationally accredited for many years. My Rising Stars rating is a Star 5, which is the highest rating of quality. For the past 10 years, I have been an Early Head Start partner with HomeStart, which is the model for the First 4 ME program in Maine. My outdoor space has been certified since 2021 as a Nature Explore Classroom.

Child care has become my passion and I have spent countless hours advocating for the field. I am a founding member of the Family Child Care Association of Maine and serve on their Board of Directors and Public Policy and Professional Learning Committees. I have been a member of the Children's Cabinet Early Childhood Advisory Council since it began several years ago. I have been a member of the National Policy Work Group for Home Grown for 4 years. Locally, I am the child care representative for the MSAD 54 First 10 Steering Committee.

I do not list all of these memberships and accomplishments to "toot my own horn". Rather, to give you some background and a picture of who I am and how dedicated I am to the child care profession. And I am not alone. Family child care providers all over the State of Maine are continually striving to improve the quality of their programs, working on professional development, often in the evenings after very long and exhausting days with children, and sharing their homes and their own families with those they serve.

In recent years, I have begun to feel more empowered as I have felt that those in our federal and state governments were finally understanding how important our work with children and families is – how vital these years are to the development of children – the impact we have on the state economy. When our state legislature decided that our field deserved a salary supplement, it was a relief. It certainly didn't make us wealthy, but it helped ease some of the financial burdens and incentivized others to enter our field. When this program developed into a tiered system, I was in the middle tier due to my level of education. This past summer I decided that this system was incentive for me - at almost 60 years old – to look into a Bachelor degree to not only increase my knowledge and the quality of my program, but to attain the highest wage tier. I enrolled at UMF last fall and expect to graduate in 2026 with a Bachelor Degree in Early Childhood Education. After the news last Friday that the proposed budget was cutting funding for child care, including the salary supplements, I wonder why I'm doing this.

I am up at 3:30 every morning, preparing for my day serving children and families. My doors open at 6AM and the last children leave most days after 5PM. I have no breaks during the day and no help. I am the teacher, administrative staff, nurse, nutrition specialist, family support system, maintenance worker, janitor, advocate, community outreach coordinator and a UMF student. I work to create a safe, fun, loving, enriching environment for children to grow and develop into amazing, kind, productive adults. And the state thinks I deserve a pay cut.

I will not take a pay cut, which means that parent fees will increase. I will no longer be able to offer scholarships to those families who need assistance. The family of 2 children in my care will not have the benefit of the Child Care Employment Award and their parent fee will increase. The purchase of learning materials and consumables will be decreased significantly. Unfortunately, these budget cuts not only affect providers, but families and children also.