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LD 210

As a constituent who is planning to have children in the near future, I am writing to express deep concern over the proposed cuts to Maine's child care investments in the biennial budget, which threaten the stability of an already fragile industry. These cuts would have significant, far-reaching consequences for child care educators, families, and the state's future prosperity. I'm asking you to oppose these cuts.

This is urgent. These programs have a real impact on working class and middle class Mainers.

Maine's Child Care Educator Salary Supplement Program

The Governor's proposed \$15 million annual cut to child care educator wages would be devastating. Reducing educator wages will exacerbate already existing workforce shortages. This program has successfully created an 11% increase in child care educators since its inception, so cutting funding now would reverse these gains and harm the industry's progress.

Maine's Child Care Employment Award

The child care tuition assistance program, which was delayed over a year in its implementation, is crucial for recruiting and retaining staff by helping workers cover child care costs. The funds were exhausted within three months, supporting around 400 professionals, with over 450 still on the waiting list. This program is vital for maintaining a stable workforce and improving child care quality statewide. The year-long delay already deprived educators of essential savings on their child care costs, and cutting the program now would significantly disrupt the support they are receiving.

Head Start

Maine's \$3.6 million investment in Head Start serves 1,742 low-income children. Eliminating this funding would result in the loss of services for 180 children, the closure of 9 classrooms, and potential loss of millions in federal funding. This is a direct threat to the education and well-being of Maine's most vulnerable children.

Conclusion

Cuts to these essential programs would result in over \$4,000 in lost wages for child care educators, the removal of 400 professionals from the tuition assistance program, and the loss of critical services for 180 children. These cuts undermine the entire early care and education system and threaten Maine's long-term economic growth. Now is the time to invest in our child care workforce and ensure a stable future for Maine's children and families.

Thank you for your attention to this crucial issue.

Sincerely,

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