



Family Child Care Association of Maine

Testimony of Jennifer Murphy Wescott, owner of Feels Like Home Early Care & Education

On behalf of the Family Child Care Association of Maine

In Opposition to L.D. 202 An Act to Increase the Number of Children a Family Child Care Provider May Care for Without Having to Be Licensed by the Department of Health and Human Services

Senator Ingwersen, Representative Meyer, and distinguished members of the Health and Human Services Committee, the Family Child Care Association of Maine (FCCAM), affiliate of the National Family Child Care Association expresses its opposition to LD 202. FCCAM's mission is to unify, promote and strengthen quality professional family child care in Maine.

FCCAM feels strongly that an increase of children in unlicensed care would not be in the best interest for the children of Maine. LD 202 changes the threshold from 2 to 4 children in unlicensed care. In the interest of child safety, we need to understand that this bill does not take into account the number of children living within the child care home. It also does not take into account the ages of the children in care. It does not mention total capacity. This could actually contradict what is in current licensing rules for family child care providers regarding ratios and ages of children.

There also would be no requirement to have an inspection by the fire marshal, water tested, be CPR/First Aid trained, or have a background check. If a provider has 4 children of their own and they can take in 4 additional children, you now have 8 children in care in a facility that has not had any safety oversight. The minimum health and safety standards of the current Family Child Care Licensing Rule help ensure a child's rights to care in an environment that protects them from harm and supports their healthy development.

In 2024, Maine reported no child deaths in licensed child care programs and no substantiated cases of child abuse/neglect. These low numbers lend us to believe that health and safety measures work. In other parts of the country, we have seen where better regulations have served the health and safety of children well. Minnesota had an average 10 child deaths in child care programs from 2007-2011 before the state acted and improved regulations of health and safety. After implementing these measures by 2013, Minnesota was down to 3 child deaths in child care programs.

Licensing provides training requirements in important subject matter to reduce child injury, illness, and death including safe sleep, medication administration, cpr & first aid. The safety of children is not supported by LD 202. Being active family child care providers, we understand first hand the childcare crisis that Maine has been experiencing for multiple years. Increasing the number of children an unlicensed provider can care for is not the solution to this problem. As a state we need to find ways to increase the number of family child care and center programs. If your interest is to support a strong child care system by encouraging more individuals to open small businesses offering family child care, then I encourage you to support current efforts supported by organizations like FCCAM and MaineAEYC that support Maine's child care system.

The Family Child Care Association of Maine offers a business tool kit on their website which is free to everyone and helps to support providers through the licensing process. LD 202 is not the right choice for Maine's children. FCCAM asks you to oppose this bill.

Thank you for your time and attention.

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