



maineaeYC

Maine Association for the
Education of Young Children

Testimony of Heather Marden on behalf of

Maine Association for the Education of Young Children

In support of LD 1089: An Act to Permanently Fund 55 Percent of the State's Share of
Education by Establishing a Tax on Incomes of More than \$1,000,000

3/26/2025

My name is Heather Marden, and I am the Co-Executive Director of the Maine Association for the Education of Young Children (MaineAEYC). I am here today to strongly support the proposed legislation to implement a 4% income tax surcharge on taxable income over \$1,000,000, with the revenue dedicated to funding public education from pre-kindergarten through 12th grade. This measure presents a crucial opportunity to secure funding for Maine's education system, particularly as it relates to early childhood education.

This surcharge is not only critical for supporting our public schools, it will also help ease the financial burden on our state's already stretched resources. We are all aware of the proposed \$42 million in cuts to child care and Head Start programs in the biennial budget. These programs are essential to the development of our youngest learners, but these cuts would disproportionately harm children and families in Maine, especially those who rely on affordable child care and early learning programs.

Maine is obligated to meet the 55% funding requirement for public education, a commitment that has placed pressure on the state's finances. This surcharge would provide a vital revenue stream that allows the state to meet its funding obligations for K-12 education without forcing lawmakers to make painful cuts to other critical programs. By generating this revenue, we can ensure that we do not have to sacrifice child care and Head Start services to meet the state's education funding goals.

In addition to easing the burden of cuts to vital programs, this surcharge will support Maine's public schools as they expand their role in early childhood education. Public schools in Maine are now increasingly tasked with providing both pre-kindergarten programs and special education services to children as young as age 3. As schools take on these important responsibilities, they need adequate resources to meet the growing

demand for high-quality early education and specialized services, such as speech therapy and individualized instruction for children with disabilities.

By directing this surcharge revenue toward education funding, we will be better positioned to provide these services, ensuring that every child, regardless of their background or needs, has access to the early support they require to thrive.

At MaineAEYC, we believe that collaboration between public schools and community-based child care providers is essential to creating a strong early childhood education system. We hope that the revenue generated from this surcharge will also support the growth of these partnerships. School districts and child care providers can share resources, ensuring that more children receive the benefits of high-quality early learning opportunities. Together, we can build a seamless system that serves children from birth through grade 3, helping to close achievement gaps and better prepare children for future academic success.

Investing in early childhood education, particularly for children with disabilities, is a proven strategy for improving long-term academic outcomes and social-emotional development. This surcharge represents a smart investment in Maine's future, ensuring that public schools can meet their growing responsibilities without sacrificing critical programs that support our most vulnerable children.

MaineAEYC urges you to support this important legislation. The revenue generated by this surcharge will help alleviate the difficult budgetary choices that have led to proposed cuts in child care and Head Start. This surcharge is an investment in Maine's children, ensuring they receive the support they need to succeed in school and beyond.

Thank you for your time and consideration.