n Support of LD 1280: An Act to Create Pilot Programs to Provide Tuition Assistance and Grants for Rural Child Care Providers

Before the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services

Apr 3, 2025

Senator Baldacci, Representative Meyer, and distinguished members of the Health and Human Services Committee,

My name is Christina Brewer, and I serve on the board of directors for DownEast Community Partners as well as a board liaison of the Parent Policy Council of HeadStart, which oversees Head Start and Early Head Start programs in both Washington and Hancock Counties. I'm writing in strong support of LD 1280, because I see firsthand how urgent the child care workforce crisis is in our rural communities.

Across our Head Start programs, we are consistently struggling to attract and retain qualified early childhood educators. It's not due to a lack of passion or interest—we have incredible people in our communities who want to do this work. But too many are held back by the cost of tuition or the logistical barriers to starting or expanding a child care program of their own.

This bill tackles both problems. It provides flexible tuition assistance to rural students who are pursuing degrees in early childhood education, and it creates a grant program to help licensed rural providers open or grow child care services. These investments would make a meaningful difference in communities like ours, where families are often stuck on waitlists, and providers are stretched thin.

The ability to serve more children in safe, high-quality care settings is essential—not just for early childhood development, but for the economic stability of working families and the overall well-being of our region. I urge you to support LD 1280 as a smart, targeted step toward addressing a crisis that continues to limit opportunity for too many Maine families.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony.

Sincerely,

Christina Brewer

Board Member of DownEast Community Partners

Board Liaison to Parent Policy Council for Head Start