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4/4/2025

Senator Ingwersen, Chair  
Representative Meyer, Chair  
Members, Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services  
100 State House Station  
Augusta, ME 04333-0100

Re: LD 1280 – *Resolve, to Create Pilot Programs to Provide Tuition Assistance and Grants for Rural Child Care Providers*

Senator Ingwersen, Representative Meyer and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide information neither for nor against LD 1280, *Resolve, to Create Pilot Programs to Provide Tuition Assistance and Grants for Rural Child Care Providers*.

This bill proposes two new pilot programs, a tuition assistance program through the Department of Education for students pursuing degrees in early childhood education and an infrastructure grant program for child care providers located in counties with a population of less than 100,000 residents to be administered by the Department of Health and Human Services.

OCFS is committed to expanding access to high quality, affordable child care in all areas of the State. OCFS believes this proposal is duplicative of existing programs. OCFS launched the TEACH Early Childhood Maine scholarship program in 2020, funded with the federal CCDF block grant and administered by MaineAEYC. The scholarship provides financial support to students pursuing a degree in early childhood education, and OCFS has increased our investment in the program since then.

The infrastructure pilot proposed by this bill appears to duplicate the infrastructure grants OCFS was able to distribute over the last few years using \$15 million in federal pandemic-related funding allocated by the Governor that was used to stand-up or expand child care programs. The infrastructure grants have been highly successful in assisting providers to expand child care capacity statewide, with thousands of slots created in these new and expanded programs throughout the state (including in rural communities). Below are two charts, the first shows, by county, of the allocation of these grants and the anticipated number of slots that will be created. The second breaks down the awards by provider and project category types.

Total	Anticipated Slots	County	Number of Awards
\$1,143,400.00	563	Androscoggin	30
\$813,500.00	345	Aroostook	15
\$2,792,100.00	1574	Cumberland	53
\$737,900.00	193	Franklin	8
\$789,000.00	148	Hancock	7
\$1,494,900.00	740	Kennebec	35
\$234,100.00	88	Knox	6
\$425,500.00	66	Lincoln	4
\$844,500.00	349	Oxford	14
\$1,236,500.00	553	Penobscot	23
\$554,700.00	146	Piscataquis	6
\$344,600.00	73	Sagadahoc	6
\$524,000.00	305	Somerset	7
\$34,000.00	46	Waldo	4
\$674,100.00	134	Washington	6
\$1,635,100.00	851	York	34
\$14,277,900.00	6174		258

Category	Total Number of Awards	Total Amount Awarded	Number of Slots Added (Anticipated*)	Avg Cost Per Slot By Category
Family Start Up	106	\$965,900.00	1095	\$882.10
Family Growth	5	\$20,000.00	20	\$1,000.00
Facility Expansion - Renovation	30	\$745,200.00	769	\$969.05
Facility Expansion – New Construct	26	\$5,608,600.00	883	\$6,351.76
Facility Start Up - Renovation	73	\$3,582,900.00	2553	\$1,403.41
Facility Start Up – New Construct	16	\$3,305,300.00	786	\$4,205.22
Facility Acquisition	2	\$50,000.00	68	\$735.29
<b>Totals</b>	<b>258</b>	<b>\$14,277,900.00</b>	<b>6174</b>	<b>\$2,312.59</b>

The infrastructure grants have been an incredible investment in the industry, expanding physical capacity to provide child care in all corners of the State. The TEACH Scholarship (and other programs like the Maine Roads to Quality Professional Development Network and the Workforce Salary Supplement System) are a strong companion to the investment in infrastructure as Maine seeks to expand both the number of early care and education staff and the quality of the care they provide.

Based on OCFS’ experience with the infrastructure grants, it is estimated that 3-10 providers could be offered some level of assistance with the \$300,000 allocated for the infrastructure grants under this proposal. A significant portion of interested individuals and providers who were able to meet the qualifications have already been able to receive financial support to expand or

stand-up programs through the existing grant program, and it is unclear what level of demand exists for the program envisioned under this bill.

OCFS appreciates your careful consideration of this proposal and the significant support of the Health and Human Services Committee in OCFS' efforts to expand access to high quality, affordable child care.

Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions during your deliberation of this bill.

Sincerely,

*Bobbi L. Johnson, LMSW*

Bobbi L. Johnson, LMSW  
Director  
Office of Child and Family Services  
Maine Department of Health and Human Services