



**Testimony in support of LD 1389 An Act to Create the Building Opportunity
Through Out-of-School Time Program
to the Health and Human Services Committee
Tuesday, April 8, 2025, 1 p.m.
By Jason Judd, Executive Director Educate Maine**

Chairs Ingwersen and Meyer, distinguished members of the Health and Human Services Committee, I am Jason Judd, Executive Director of Educate Maine and I appear before you today in support of LD 1389, An Act to Create the Building Opportunity Through Out-of-School Time (BOOST) Program.

Educate Maine is a business-led education organization which champions career readiness and education attainment of Maine people by supporting education along the full continuum of life – from early childhood through adulthood. We also offer research and Maine-specific data to help inform your decisions on key education issues.

As a business-led organization, I will focus my remarks and our support on how this proposal before you today will support Maine's workforce and our economy.

First, we start with the knowledge that, according to data in the newest Maine Kids Count Data Book, 69.6 percent of all Maine children under the age of six have all parents in the workforce. As you have heard me say before in this committee, for our youngest children that underscores the need for full-day, safe, reliable and affordable child care while parents work. But those needs don't stop once a child turns five years old and starts formal school. Working parents need care for their children, up to age 13, for the hours they are working and for which their child/children are not in school. Given the rural nature of Maine, and the fact that so many working parents commute to jobs outside the communities they live in, often that means that parents need child care for 10 or more hours a day. That is at least three additional hours beyond the typical school day.

That's why out-of-school care, also known as before and after school care, is so important. And similar to child care for Maine's youngest children, Maine lacks an adequate supply of this care.

According to data from the National Afterschool Alliance, we know that for every Maine child enrolled in an after school program, there are five additional children, and their parents, waiting for such an opportunity.

Out-of-school programs in Maine – before school, after school, vacation camps and summer day programs -- consistently have waitlist. Capacity is simply not meeting need.

As a result, more parents are leaving the workforce, reducing their work hours, or being forced to move to less desirable jobs. That hurts their families economically and has a negative impact on the productivity of the businesses/non-profits they work for, and our local and state economies.

At the same time, we know from research that the academic enrichment offered in out-of-school time programs – like help with homework, extra reading and reading supports, and exposure to activities in STEM subjects, improve student engagement and learning. It also helps support increase student attendance at school, reduces risky behaviors and increases health and wellness outcomes. All of these foundational pieces work together to increase high school graduation rates and raises student aspirations to participate in post-secondary and careers opportunities.

The \$5 million investment sought in LD 1389 will not reduce all of the out-of-school programs' waitlists, but it is a critical start.

I urge your unanimous support of LD 1389.