

Joshua Taylor
Windham
LD 1389

Testimony of Joshua R. Taylor

In support of LD 1389 - BOOST Bill: Building Opportunities through Out of School Time.

Senator Baldacci, Representative Meyer, and distinguished members of the Health and Human Services Committee, my name is Joshua Taylor, and I am parent of children that attend the Windham/ Raymond SACC afterschool and summer programs. I'm testifying in strong support of LD 1389 - BOOST Bill: Building Opportunities through Out of School Time.

This bill offers a critical investment in the future of Maine's children, families, and workforce by expanding access to quality out-of-school time programming for youth ages 5 to 13.

My wife has been in childcare for the past 17 years, and I have seen firsthand the impact, care and love that she has for each one of her children that pass through her center. This is the exact same care, love, and support that is provided from the SACC program and other organizations throughout the state. As a lifetime resident of Maine, I have seen the state grow, change, become better and flourish, but there is always room for improvement. I can remember growing up telling someone you were from Maine they would always ask "Maine?! Where is that? Do you even have running water there?" Now, when you tell someone you're from Maine, the response is "Maine?! You're so lucky! I love it there!"

This is the same type of response that I want my children to experience as they become adults and continue to find Maine an amazing place to live, grow, and work. These programs are a foundation of that growth. It is an investment in the future generations of this great state, and an investment in myself and family to allow us to continue to work and provide for our family now.

Our nation is more polarized than ever. Fighting from both sides, arguments about what is right and wrong but in no place has anyone ever thought of the next generation that is being exposed to this and wondering where they fit in world. This is an opportunity to give them a safe space to grow and learn. A place to be safe, seen, heard, and a place to be a kid.

These programs reduce risky behaviors, provide access to healthy meals and snacks, and support physical activity. Research links these programs to fewer conduct issues, lower substance use, and greater social-emotional development. Caring adult mentors help foster resilience, confidence, and a sense of belonging. Beyond helping children thrive, out of school time programs give parents peace of mind, allowing them to focus on work and contribute to the economy, knowing their children are safe, supported, and learning.

The need for expanded out-of-school time programming is urgent and growing. In Maine, 70% of young children live in households where all available parents are working outside the home. While the state has focused attention and resources on the critical needs of early childhood education in recent years, families with elementary and middle school-age children still face major gaps in care during out-of-school hours. According to the National Afterschool Alliance, for every one child enrolled in an afterschool program in Maine, five more are waiting for a slot—a clear sign that demand far outpaces supply.

This gap leaves working families with few safe, affordable options, especially in rural and underserved areas. Not surprisingly, 83% of Maine parents say that afterschool programs help them keep their jobs. Yet, programs consistently operate with waitlists for before- and afterschool care, vacation full-day programs, and summer day camps. There simply aren't enough programs or slots to meet the needs of Maine families. Additionally, the programs that exist struggle to meet the needs of the children in their care. Workforce challenges, children's mental and behavioral health needs, and space

constraints mean that needs are going unmet.

In short, LD 1389 is not just an education or childcare bill—it is a workforce bill, a public health bill, and a youth development bill all in one. It is a lifeline to many working families, support, an acknowledgement of Maines residents, and a commitment to the future of Maine’s people. Maine has always been the “pine tree state.” Trees that can weather any storm, stand tall, and provide beauty to Maine. Please invest in the students to be the same. Strong, wonderful, able to withstand any storm that may come, and make Maine a beautiful place to be.

I respectfully urge you to vote Ought to Pass on LD 1389. Thank you for your commitment to supporting Maine’s working families and the future of our youth.

Sincerely,

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