



**TESTIMONY BY KIM RUSSELL, DIRECTOR OF SPECIAL PROJECTS, EDUCATE  
MAINE TO THE JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS  
AND FINANCIAL AFFAIRS**

**IN SUPPORT OF**

**LD 483: An ACT to Authorize a General Fund Bond Issue to Secure Prosperity for Maine  
Families and Businesses**

**Wednesday, April 9, 2025, 10 A.M.**

Chairs Rotundo and Gattine, and distinguished members of the Appropriations and Financial Affairs Committee, I am Kim Russell, Director of Special Projects at Educate Maine. 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.

I am testifying today in support of LD 483, Speaker Fecteau bond bill – specially the part of this proposal that would create \$100 million in bonds for childcare infrastructure.

We take this position because childcare is critical for Maine’s workforce development. High-quality childcare is not only an integral part of early childhood development, but also an economic necessary for working parents.

We know that if parents do not have childcare, they cannot go to work. If they lose their childcare, they cannot go to work. And, if they miss too many days because of childcare gaps, far too many lose or leave their jobs altogether. Why? Because employers need a reliable workforce and that reliable workforce depends on reliable childcare. Childcare is the workforce behind Maine’s workforce.

A 2023 ReadyNation national study that found the lack of affordable childcare in America was costing the national economy \$122 billion in lost earnings, productivity, and revenue every year.

[In Maine](#), the lack of childcare for children just up to age 3, **costs our state economy \$403 million a year.**

The 2023 national analysis featured a survey in which many parents reported that the infant-toddler childcare crisis had caused them to be fired or to have pay or hours reduced. The crisis caused parents to be demoted or transferred to a less desirable job, or change from full-time to part-time work. Many parents reported quitting a job due to childcare problems.

Speaker Fecteau's bond proposal before you today addresses the lack of child care infrastructure. We are pleased to read in the sponsor's amendment that the match requirement for these funds are expanded beyond just schools to private businesses, municipalities, philanthropic organizations, non-profits or a combination of these entities. We are also pleased to see that one-third of these funds are reserved for smaller projects; and for those projects under \$100,000, the match requirement is removed. These provisions will further support the family-based childcare programs whose needs may be less elaborate but still a critical piece of their programs. For example, someone wanting to create a home-based childcare may need to install a fence or make changes to a bathroom or doorway – which, without support for these capital expenses, may be the factor that is standing in the way of creating a new family-based provider.

Dedicating a portion of these bond funds to smaller projects will help rebuild, or build new, family-based childcare. Family-based childcare is a vital part of Maine's childcare system in every community – especially in rural Maine where centers do not exist. The Office of Child and Family Services reports that between 2013-2024, the number of family childcare providers in Maine declined by 39% (from 1,134 to 702) which significantly and negatively impacts rural communities with lower populations where family childcare is the most prevalent.

The bond bill before you seeking to expand the physical structures of childcare programming across Maine is important for Maine's continued economic growth. But, it is only half of the equation. Staffing these childcare programs once they are built, and supporting the childcare workforce to provide high-quality care for working parents is the other half of the equation. And it is equally critical. Which is why Educate Maine, and more than 200 others testified in your Committee in February opposing the proposed cuts to childcare wages as presented in the biennial budget proposal.

I urge you to support LD 483 to support economic growth in Maine.