



Testimony of Rita Furlow,
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Before the Joint Standing Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs
LD 483
An Act to Authorize a General Fund Bond Issue to Secure Prosperity
for Maine Families and Businesses
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Good afternoon, Senator Rotundo and Representative Gattine, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs, my name is Rita Furlow. I am the Senior Policy Analyst at the Maine Children's Alliance, and I am here today in support of LD 483, *An Act to Authorize a General Fund Bond Issue to Secure Prosperity for Maine Families and Businesses*. The Maine Children's Alliance is a statewide non-partisan, non-profit research and advocacy organization whose mission is to promote sound public policies to improve the lives of children, youth, and families in Maine.

Supporting Maine's children is essential for our state's future prosperity. Research on brain development reveals that children's early experiences shape the brain's architecture, providing a strong or weak foundation for future learning, behavior, and health. Ensuring a strong foundation early in life is critical to everything that follows. Strong foundations are built by making sure young children have positive learning experiences and stable, consistent relationships with caring adults at home and in the community.

Today, with over 70%ⁱ of Maine children under age six having all resident parents in the workforce, it is crucial to make sure Maine's investments in early childhood reflect the science of what children need, while also accommodating Maine families as they raise the generation that will lead Maine into the future.

By investing in a child care bond, Maine can create and grow safe, healthy, and developmentally appropriate early education environments for young children while increasing access to care. Public and private support for facilities can remove a significant ongoing cost burden for providers and allow them to pay higher salaries and offer quality care. Public investment can support the planning, design, and financing of these spaces. Planning, designing, and building a new or renovating an existing early learning center can excite and generate community support and partnerships.

Facilities such as [Educare Central Maine](#) serve as examples of how public-private partnerships can create models for spaces that are designed to meet the needs of children, families, and educators. Constructed with a mix of private and public funds, the Waterville facility serves as a demonstration site for not only quality teaching and instruction but a model for excellence in design and space for children, educators, and parents.

We appreciate the Speaker's goal of supporting bold solutions to support the child care needs of families in Maine. Investing in the infrastructure needs of child care is an important element to create a child care system in our state that can support Maine children and families. When children can get a strong early start, and their parents can be fully engaged in the workforce, our communities and economy will also reap the rewards of this investment. If we want Maine's future to be in good hands, we need to support our youngest children — a future generation of young people who can lead our communities and grow our economy.

Thank you for your consideration.

¹The Annie E. Casey Foundation, KIDS COUNT Data Center, Children under age 6 with all available parents in work force (5-yr averages) in Maine, retrieved from: <https://datacenter.kidscount.org/data/tables/7317-children-under-age-6-with-all-available-parents-in-work-force-5-yr-averages?loc=21&loct=2#detailed/2/any/false/1729,37,871,870,573,869,36,868,867,133/any/14380,14381>