



**Testimony by Auburn Chief of Police Jason Moen in support of  
LD 1689 An Act To Implement the Recommendations of the Commission to Study  
Expansion of Public Preschool and Early Care and Education”**

Thursday, May 1, 2025 10 A.M.

Chairs Rafferty and Murphy, and distinguished members of the Education and Cultural Affairs Committees, I am Jason Moen, Chief of Police in Auburn. I am also President of Maine Chiefs of Police Association and a member of the anti-crime group FIGHT CRIME: INVEST IN KIDS, which is made up of 140 Maine law enforcement leaders. It is my honor to be testifying of LD 1689 “An Act to Implement the Recommendations of the Commission to Study Expansion of Public Preschool and Early Care and Education.”

I would like to offer the committees a unique perspective on high-quality early learning – its impact on crime. I have been in Maine law enforcement for my entire career and I have seen how the lack of properly supervised activities can lead kids into crime-ridden environments.

Government’s most fundamental responsibility is to protect the public safety. There is no substitute for tough law enforcement. But once a crime has been committed, lives have already been shattered. Those of us on the front line in the fight against crime understand that we will never fix the crime problem solely through arrests and imprisonment. We can save lives, hardship – and money – by investing in programs that can keep children from growing up to become criminals in the first place.

Today I’m here to tell you that high-quality early learning programs are also a great crime reduction strategy.

Many in this room know what the research tells us about what a critical time the first five years of life is for a child’s physical, emotional, social and cognitive development.

What is equally important, but less well known, is that quality early learning programs can also significantly reduce the chances of a child growing up to become a criminal.

A study of the Chicago Child-Parents Centers shows these facts. These centers provided school readiness programs to 100,000 preschoolers from some of Chicago’s toughest neighborhoods over the course of 30 years. At age 18 the study examined outcomes for a subgroup of these children and matched those outcomes with a peer group of similar kids not enrolled in the Centers. The study showed that kids who did not receive quality early learning programs were **70 percent more likely to have been arrested for a violent crime by age 18**. By age 24 the now young adults who were in the Child-Parent Centers program as children were 20 percent less likely to have served time in jail.

Most recently, an MIT study of the Boston preschool program found that enrollees were less likely to have been incarcerated in a juvenile facility during high school, compared to non-enrollees.



High-quality early learning and child care programs also save money. A well-respected, independent cost-benefit analysis of nearly 20 different studies showed that early learning programs can, on average, return a “profit” (economic benefit minus cost) to society of nearly \$27,000 for every child served, when cost savings from reduced crime are included.

Maine has made solid progress on increasing the option for voluntary Pre-K programming in various regions across our state in recent years, now serving about 52 percent of our 4-year-olds.

We know that across our communities there are schools and community partnerships interested in adding public PreK programs, and that there is a great need to have our youngest learners served better by our educational system. The public PreK expansions proposed in this bill will address the important work needed to align credentialing, procedures, policies, standard and rules for early childhood providers across all settings; and create regional coordinators to work with public schools and community partners to address the unique needs within communities to start or expand public preschool. We are also pleased that the sponsor’s amendment includes provisions to expanded Maine’s mixed delivery system of public preschool, recognizing the unique variation of needs within communities, especially our rural communities, and parent choice.

We are asking you to support the PreK funding expansion to provide these critical early learning opportunities to additional Maine students.

Thank you.