



Testimony in Support of LD 1859 “An Act to Improve Access to Child Care and Early Childhood Education by Establishing Regional Resource Hubs” Before the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services
Senator Ingwersen, Representative Meyer, and Honorable Members of the Health and Human Services Committee

Dear Senator Ingwersen, Representative Meyer, and Honorable Members of the Health and Human Services Committee:

My name is Kiersten S. Purington and I am the President & CEO of the Aroostook Partnership in Caribou, ME. The Aroostook Partnership is a unique private/public consortium of over 65 businesses, the Northern Maine Development Commission, County higher education institutions, and several regional non-profit organizations. Our mission is to ensure the economic strength, growth, and resiliency of Aroostook County.

We in the Partnership believe that **LD-1859 “An Act to Improve Access to Child Care and Early Childhood Education by Establishing Regional Resource Hubs”** is critical to helping Maine’s overall economy. Here in Aroostook County, we are experiencing a true crisis surrounding childcare which is reflected in other communities across the state of Maine. Although childcare issues are traditionally viewed through a social lens, the lack of available and affordable childcare significantly and negatively impacts the health of our economy. A lack of access to affordable, high-quality childcare is among one of the most pressing barriers to workforce participation and retention in Aroostook County resulting in an inability to contribute meaningfully to the regional and state economy.

Over the last year, the Partnership has supported the development of the Aroostook Child Care Resource Center (ACCRC), a vital initiative led by the United Way of Aroostook. This emerged from a grassroots effort to address the lack of availability and affordability of childcare in The County. Research conducted by a committee consisting of a cross-section of employers, childcare providers, and educational institutions revealed that our childcare system is extremely fragile with not enough capacity to serve a growing and necessary demand. Many childcare providers do not have the necessary support in place as reflected by the fact that childcare is a “cottage industry” with no operational or functional framework.

The ACCRC is a salient example of an early childhood learning and development “resource hub” and aligns strongly with the proposal delineated in LD-1859. It is designed to build a strong provider network, assist with training, development and licensing, expands the childcare workforce via partnerships with local educators, and serves as an important information source for parents and families to make informed childcare decisions. Aroostook Partnership is committed to supporting this effort and we see the ACCRC as an excellent model of how addressing this crisis can strengthen the economic conditions of northern Maine by promoting family stability, workforce availability, and community well-being.



Passing this bill will be greatly beneficial for the economic health of Aroostook County and the State of Maine. Thank you for considering our perspectives and for supporting this important initiative. Please do not hesitate to contact my office should you require additional information or support.

Sincerely,



Kiersten S. Purington
President & CEO
Aroostook Partnership
Dated 13 May 2025

