



FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT®
FOR HEALTHY LIVING
FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

Testimony of Meg Helming before
the Committee on Health and Human Services
in support of

LD 1955: An Act to Increase Child Care Affordability and Early Childhood Educator Stability
May 15, 2025

Senator Ingwersen, Representative Meyer, and distinguished members of the Health and Human Services Committee, my name is Meg Helming and I'm the Chief Operating Officer at the YMCA Alliance of Northern New England, which represents the 15 YMCAs in Maine. The YMCA strongly supports LD 1955: *An Act to Increase Child Care Affordability and Early Childhood Educator Stability*.

As the state's largest provider of early childhood education and school-age care, the YMCA has seen firsthand the positive impact of state investments in Maine's early childhood workforce and affordability programs. In particular, the Child Care Employment Award and Wage Supplement programs have been essential tools in helping us attract and retain the dedicated educators who deliver safe, consistent, and high-quality care. These programs are not only effective—they are necessary to stabilize the workforce and ensure children thrive in nurturing environments.

It is imperative that the state continue to signal to providers and educators that these supports will remain in place. Continuity in these initiatives is critical to maintaining trust in the field and to encouraging more individuals to pursue and stay in early childhood careers.

We also strongly support efforts to expand access to education and credentialing pathways, which will help build a more robust and professional workforce. Removing barriers to training and advancement will open the door for more Mainers to enter this vital field and grow within it.

At the same time, families' ability to access and afford quality care remains a significant challenge. The Child Care Affordability Program (CCAP) is a critical mechanism by which low- and moderate-income families can access the care they need to participate in the workforce and sustain economic stability. However, the current waitlist is placing immense strain on families and on providers like the YMCA, which often try to bridge the gap with limited financial assistance of our own. We rely on CCAP as a vital support for the families we serve—without it, many would simply be unable to access care.

In closing, we urge continued and expanded investment in Maine's early childhood workforce and affordability infrastructure. These programs are not just investments in individual families or providers—they are essential to the economic stability and long-term well-being of our state.

We urge the Committee to vote "Ought to Pass" on LD 1955. Thank you for your consideration and for your continued work to support Maine's children, families, and early educators.

Sincerely,

Meg Helming

Contact: Meg Helming, YMCA Alliance of Northern New England
P: 207.232.9896 **E:** meg.helming@nneymcas.org