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Testimony of Penobscot Bay YMCA CEO Whitney Files 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 Honorable Members of the Committee on Health and Human Services, my name is Whitney Files, and I am the CEO of the Penobscot Bay YMCA, serving families throughout Knox County. I am writing today in strong support of *LD 1955: An Act to Increase Child Care Affordability and Early Childhood Educator Stability*.

At the Penobscot Bay YMCA, we are the largest provider of early childhood care in our region, offering high-quality, licensed care and education for children from six weeks to five years old, along with after-school and summer programs. We are proud to serve families from all backgrounds—working parents, single caregivers, and those striving to build a better future. Yet, our ability to do so is increasingly strained by workforce shortages and housing insecurity.

LD 1955 proposes meaningful, systemic investments in Maine's early child care workforce—through salary supplements, scholarships, and apprenticeships—and provides direct support for early educators who are also parents. These initiatives are not only smart policy but essential to stabilizing a field that is in crisis.

We are losing talented educators because they simply cannot afford to remain in this work. The compensation does not match the training, the responsibility, or the cost of living—especially in areas like the Midcoast, where housing costs continue to rise and affordable options are vanishing. LD 1955 recognizes that quality care begins with quality educators—and that to stabilize and build back a sustainable child care system, we must support those who provide it. By aligning financial assistance with education and training, this bill helps elevate the profession while expanding access to care for working families.

The only adjustment we would recommend is that the salary supplement be prorated based on an employee's hours worked. Full-time employees (35+ hours per week) should receive the highest supplement, while part-time workers (10+ hours per week) should receive a reduced amount. While substitutes play a vital role, we believe the program should prioritize and incentivize consistent, committed staffing in order to retain and reward the educators most central to program stability and child development.

We urge your support of this important legislation to ensure that early childhood education remains a viable career path, and that our communities can continue to thrive.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully submitted,  
Whitney Files

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