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

LD 1736: An Act to Increase the Supply of Child Care Services Through the Use of Contracts
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. Thank you for the opportunity to write in support of LD 1736.

This bill presents a timely and important opportunity to address persistent gaps in childcare access across our state by authorizing the Office of Child and Family Services to contract directly with childcare providers. As Maine's largest childcare provider, we see firsthand how families—especially those with infants and toddlers, children with disabilities, and those living in rural or underserved areas—struggle to find stable, affordable care.

LD 1736 creates a more flexible and equitable payment structure by allowing direct contracts that support providers in delivering consistent services to high-need populations. These contracts would offer predictable revenue, allowing providers like the YMCA to maintain quality staffing, open additional slots, and better meet community needs—including during non-traditional hours or in regions where care options are scarce.

We especially appreciate the bill's recognition of local and regional needs assessments to guide funding priorities. This data-informed approach will help ensure that investments are targeted where they are most needed and most effective.

Maine must continue to pursue innovative and sustainable strategies to expand access to childcare and strengthen our early childhood system. LD 1736 is a critical step in that direction. We urge the Committee to vote "Ought to Pass."

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Meg Helming

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