



Testimony in Support of LD 1428:

“An Act to Increase Access to Child Care for Maine Families”

Senator Ingwersen, Representative Meyer, and the distinguished members of the Committee on Health and Human Services, my name is Harris Van Pate, and I serve as policy analyst for Maine Policy Institute. Maine Policy is a free-market think tank, a nonpartisan, non-profit organization that advocates for individual liberty and economic freedom in Maine. Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of LD 1428, “An Act to Increase Access to Child Care for Maine Families.”

This bill represents a targeted, common-sense approach to reducing regulatory burdens currently limiting child care options for Maine families. LD 1428 does three essential things:

1. **It removes an unnecessary requirement for outdoor recreational space** by allowing child care providers to operate if a public recreational area is within one-quarter mile. This simple change removes a rigid one-size-fits-all mandate. It enables providers, especially in urban and lower-income regions with limited space, to operate more flexibly while maintaining access to outdoor play. We would even encourage amending the bill to expand this provision beyond just one-quarter mile.
2. **It permits child care providers to operate in residential zones as of right**, treating them similarly to other residential uses. This provision eliminates costly and time-consuming zoning barriers and recognizes that family child care homes are, by definition, compatible with residential neighborhoods. Municipal overreach in zoning should not obstruct parents’ ability to access care.
3. **It amends rules for low-income housing projects**, allowing community rooms in those developments to be used for child care. This is a productive use of existing infrastructure, expands access for low-income families, and better uses taxpayer-subsidized housing resources.

Maine Policy Institute supports these reforms because they reduce barriers to entry, expand parental choice, and encourage entrepreneurship, particularly for women and small business owners without creating new subsidies, mandates, or tax burdens. Instead of expanding government-run systems or layering on new spending, this bill empowers communities and private providers to meet demand organically.

Maine’s current child care system is constrained not by a lack of public investment, but by outdated rules and unnecessary red tape. Lowering regulatory costs and promoting



market solutions are essential to making child care affordable and available, particularly in rural communities.¹

LD 1428 is a step in the right direction. Streamlining rules and reducing zoning and facility burdens will increase childcare openings, drive down costs, and improve access for working families without expanding bureaucracy or raising taxes.

For these reasons, we urge you to vote “Ought to Pass” on LD 1428. Thank you for your consideration.

¹ <https://mainepolicy.org/research/legislative-guidebook-for-the-132nd-maine-legislature/>