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FOR HEALTHY LIVING
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Testimony of Annie Colaluca 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 Annie Colaluca and I'm the Executive Director of Early Learning and Family Services for the Bath Area Family YMCA. I strongly support LD 1955: *An Act to Increase Child Care Affordability and Early Childhood Educator Stability*.

As a trusted community institution serving families throughout the region, we are deeply invested in ensuring that every child has access to safe, high-quality care—and that every working family has the support they need to thrive. Due to overwhelming demand in our region—including from the area's largest employer, Bath Iron Works—we are actively and significantly expanding our childcare programs. The need for reliable, affordable childcare is urgent, and we are committed to meeting that need. But we cannot do this alone. Our ability to grow depends on our ability to recruit and retain dedicated, talented educators. That is why continued investment in the Child Care Employment Award and Wage Supplement programs is so critical. These initiatives help us compete for qualified staff and offer fair, stable wages to those entrusted with the care and development of our youngest Mainers.

At the same time, families' ability to access and afford care remains one of the greatest challenges. The Child Care Affordability Program (CCAP) is a vital resource that allows low- and moderate-income families to access the care they need in order to work and remain economically stable. However, the current waitlist for CCAP is creating enormous strain—both for families and for providers like the Y. We do all we can to fill in the gaps through our own financial assistance programs, but those resources are limited. CCAP is not a supplemental benefit—it is a lifeline. Without it, many of the families we serve would simply be unable to access care.

We urge the Committee to prioritize continued and expanded funding for both the childcare workforce and affordability programs that are holding this fragile system together. These investments are essential to supporting working families, growing our economy, and building strong communities.

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,

Annie Colaluca

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