

Testimony in Support of LD 1736, LD 1859, and LD 1955
Before the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services
Senator Ingwersen, Representative Meyer, and Honorable Members of the Health and Human Services Committee

My name is Charlotte Jacobs, and I am a Program Director from Gorham, Maine. I am writing to express my strong support for LD 1736, LD 1859, and LD 1955—three essential bills that take targeted, meaningful steps toward solving Maine’s child care crisis.

I entered the field of early childhood education in 2011 out of necessity—my daughter needed child care, and the most practical solution was to work in a center that offered an employee discount. Since then, I’ve witnessed firsthand how the child care sector has remained in crisis for over a decade.

Despite these long-standing challenges, recent efforts—such as the salary supplement program and the Child Care Employee Affordability Program (CCEAP)—have made meaningful progress. These initiatives reflect thoughtful planning and dedication from Maine’s legislators, and they’ve had a positive impact. But they need to go further. If we want Maine’s early childhood education system to grow and thrive, these supports must be expanded.

Right now, salary supplements are barely enough to keep up with the rising cost of living. Educators continue to pour their heart and soul into nurturing the youngest Mainers, yet many are forced to leave the profession because they simply can’t afford to stay. I know many dedicated teachers currently on the CCEAP waitlist who would return to or remain in the field if they received this crucial support.

One of the greatest challenges we face as child care providers is finding a way to pay our staff livable wages without increasing tuition and placing an even heavier financial burden on families. Parents are already struggling with the cost of care, and without more support, they—like educators—are reaching a breaking point.

There are currently over 600 families on the CCAP waitlist. That number alone illustrates the urgent need for expanded subsidies. Right now, no one is getting ahead—families, children, and educators alike are just trying to stay afloat.

The thought of leaving a profession I love breaks my heart. I see the difference we make every single day. Early educators become integral parts of families’ support systems—guiding parents, answering questions, and helping shape the future of our communities. We are not just care providers; we are educators, mentors, and advocates.

These three bills—LD 1878, LD 1934, and LD 1955—represent a comprehensive and thoughtful response to Maine’s child care crisis. They will strengthen our supply of care, increase affordability, support the professional development of educators, and honor the vital role we play in the lives of children and families.

I respectfully urge the committee to vote “Ought to Pass” on all three bills. An investment in early childhood education is an investment in Maine’s future—and the return on that investment will be felt across our economy and communities.

Thank you for your time and commitment to Maine’s children and families.

Sincerely,

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