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Testimony 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 members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services,

My name is Sue Powers and I am an early childhood consultant from Mapleton, delivering testimony on behalf of the Maine Community Action Partnership, a statewide organization dedicated to improving the quality of life of Maine people by advocating for, promoting and supporting the work of the Maine community action agencies. I work with childcare providers and early childhood educators across the state to provide quality early care to families. I am writing today to express my strong support for LD 1955, and believe when combined with LD 1736, and LD 1859—will take meaningful strides toward solving Maine's childcare crisis.

LD 1955 directly addresses two of the greatest challenges in Maine's childcare system: the affordability of care for families and the retention and compensation of the early childhood workforce. The bill proposes targeted investments in childcare affordability, childcare educator wage supplements, scholarships, apprenticeships, and direct financial assistance for childcare professionals—ensuring that those who educate and care for our youngest learners can afford to remain in the field.

- **More than 600 families in Maine** are currently on the waitlist for childcare affordability programs, reflecting a clear gap between what families can pay and what high-quality care actually costs.
- Child care is often the **largest monthly expense** for working families—sometimes exceeding the cost of housing or college tuition. The average annual cost of childcare for an infant in Maine is over **\$10,000 per year**, a figure that is out of reach for many low- and middle-income families.
- At the same time, Maine's childcare educators earn an average of **\$16.40 per hour**—a wage that is not competitive with less demanding jobs in retail or food service. Many educators live at or near the poverty line and cannot afford health care, housing, or childcare themselves.

The introduction of Maine's **Child Care Educator Wage Supplement Program** has already shown promising results: the state saw a **workforce increase of 11% to 15%**, reversing trends of high turnover and burnout that have plagued the sector for years.

Without sustained funding and continued investment, this progress is at risk. We must maintain and grow our childcare workforce by continuing to invest in their **wages, benefits, and educational pathways**.

Families cannot afford childcare, and providers cannot afford to stay in the field. LD 1955 recognizes that **affordable, quality child care depends on a stable, well-compensated workforce**—and makes the strategic investments needed to support both.

For Maine's economic growth and for the future of our children, I urge you to support LD 1955. Together, these three bills offer a comprehensive response to Maine's childcare challenges by strengthening supply, increasing affordability, supporting education, and honoring the workforce. We respectfully urge the committee to vote "**Ought to Pass**" on LD 1955, LD 1859 and LD 1736.