



May 14, 2025

Senator Ingwersen, Representative Meyer, and distinguished members of the Health and Human Services Committee,

I am the director of a childcare program with 45 staff members and a long waiting list of more than 30 children. I cannot overstate the heartbreak of having to turn away families—many of whom are single parents or essential workers—because we simply cannot hire and retain enough qualified staff.

I strongly support **LD 1955: An Act to Increase Child Care Affordability and Early Childhood Educator Stability** because it directly addresses two of the biggest barriers we face: the high cost of care for families and the inability to offer competitive wages to our workforce.

Child care educators are some of the most dedicated professionals I know, yet they earn, on average, only \$16.40 an hour. Many of mine rely on public assistance themselves. Without meaningful compensation, they leave for jobs in retail or fast food. It's heartbreaking and it's unsustainable. At the same time, the cost for families is astronomical. I've spoken with parents who pay more for child care than their mortgage. Others are forced to leave the workforce entirely. It's a lose-lose situation for families, for children, and for Maine's economy.

LD 1955 would build on the successful Child Care Wage Supplement Program and continue the progress we've seen in retaining and recruiting educators. It would also help families afford the care they so desperately need.

Please vote "**Ought to Pass**" on LD 1955. Maine cannot solve its workforce or child care crisis without investing in those who provide and depend on early childhood care and education.

Thank you for your leadership and support of Maine's children and families.

Warm regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "J Szantyr", is written over a light blue rectangular background.

Jennifer Szantyr

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