

Janet T. Mills
Governor

Sara Gagné-Holmes
Commissioner



Maine Department of Health and Human Services
Child and Family Services
11 State House Station
2 Anthony Avenue
Augusta, Maine 04333-0011
Tel.: (207) 624-7900; Toll Free: (877) 680-5866
TTY: Dial 711 (Maine Relay); Fax: (207) 287-5282

5/15/2025

Senator Ingwersen, Chair
Representative Meyer, Chair
Members, Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services
100 State House Station
Augusta, ME 04333-0100

Re: LD 1955 – *An Act to Increase Child Care Affordability and Early Childhood Educator Stability*

Senator Ingwersen, Representative Meyer and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide information in opposition to LD 1955, *An Act to Increase Child Care Affordability and Early Childhood Educator Stability*.

This bill would make a number of changes regarding early child care and education, including:

- Replacing the current Workforce Salary Supplement Program with “Salary Sustainability Program for Child Care Professionals,” providing \$500,000 annually for the program, and requiring an assessment every five years
- Permanently codifying in statute the Child Care Employment Award Pilot and renaming it the “Maine Child Care Affordability Program Child Care Award” and providing \$1 million annually for the program
- Establishing child care provider scholarships for those pursuing higher education in early childhood education or related fields
- Establishing an apprentice program for individuals employed or seeking employment with a licensed child care provider.
- Requiring the State Board of Education to update its plan for career and technical education to include opportunities related to early childhood in career and technical centers statewide.
- Requiring the Department to develop a long-term plan for the financial stability of CCAP with a report on this topic due by 1/2/2026.
- Providing a one-time appropriation of \$3.8 million for the Child Care Affordability Program (CCAP).

OCFS is opposed to this bill as it would require a General Fund appropriation. OCFS is also opposed because a number of these initiatives already exist (albeit some in a different form than envisioned by this bill). For example, this bill makes minimal changes to the existing Workforce Salary Supplement Program besides additional funding and the requirement of an assessment and corresponding report every five years. Of note, OCFS already provides data and information on

the Salary Supplement Program in its Early Care and Education Annual Report.

OCFS has also implemented the Child Care Employment Award Pilot. In doing so, OCFS found that a majority (65%) of those who applied for the pilot met the eligibility criteria for CCAP and were served by CCAP instead of the pilot.

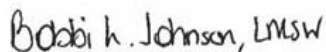
OCFS is concerned about the one-time appropriation of \$3.8 million for CCAP in this bill. One time funding leaves families with a lack of stability going forward as families are likely to lose their spot in the program at their next annual redetermination and be returned to the waitlist. OCFS is in the process of finalizing a report with the Center for Early Learning Funding Equity (CELFE) regarding the cost to fully fund CCAP for all eligible children in Maine. This report aligns closely with the requirement under this bill that OCFS develop a long-term plan for the fiscal sustainability of CCAP. OCFS would appreciate the opportunity to finalize and present the result of that work, allowing legislators, members of the public, advocates, providers, etc. to review, before proposing additional and/or duplicative reporting requirements.

OCFS already supports scholarships and apprenticeships for those interested in pursuing a career in early care and education. OCFS provides funding to MaineAEYC for the TEACH scholarship program and provides funding for apprenticeships through our contract with the University of Southern Maine for the Maine Roads to Quality Professional Development Network (MRTQ PDN). This bill would require rulemaking for the implementation of these two portions of the bill. OCFS does not see a need for rules and believes the current system is meeting the needs of the industry.

While OCFS appreciates the intent of this bill to enhance the affordability of early care and education and further educational opportunities for those interested in pursuing a career in this field, OCFS would encourage the Committee to focus on existing initiatives and programs before considering additional funding allocations, expansion or modification of programs, etc.

Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions during your deliberation of this bill.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Bobbi L. Johnson, LMSW". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Bobbi L. Johnson, LMSW
Director
Office of Child and Family Services
Maine Department of Health and Human Services