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HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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Testimony of Representative Holly Eaton in support of
LD 1428, An Act to Increase Access to Child Care for Maine Families
Before the Health and Human Services Committee

Senator Ingwersen, Representative Meyer and honorable members of the Health and Human Services Committee, my name is Holly Eaton, and I proudly represent House District 15 — a coastal and island district that includes Deer Isle, Stonington, Brooklin, Tremont, Southwest Harbor, Frenchboro, Swan's Island, Isle au Haut, and Vinalhaven. I'm here today in strong support of **LD 1428**.

Access to child care is one of the most urgent issues facing families in my district — and across the state. As a single working parent of two young boys, I know firsthand the impossible choices parents are making every day just to hold it all together. I've driven in opposite directions to reach two separate providers, scrambled for care when one closed unexpectedly, and had to turn down work obligations when no other options were available.

But beyond my own experience, I hear regularly from working families, especially on the islands, who are desperate for solutions. Parents want to work. Providers want to offer care. But barriers — like zoning restrictions, facility requirements and inflexible funding rules — stand in the way.

This bill offers practical, thoughtful changes. Allowing child care facilities to operate near existing recreational spaces, not only on-site, gives small providers more flexibility without sacrificing quality. Ensuring municipalities can't zone child care out of residential areas just makes sense — especially when so many providers are operating out of their homes.

Finally, allowing the Maine State Housing Authority to amend its rules and use required community rooms for child care in low-income housing is an efficient and much-needed change. These are rooms already built, already funded, and already sitting in the heart of where families live.

In rural communities like mine and throughout Maine, we can't afford to let red tape stand in the way of child care. The barriers may look different in each region, but the impact is the same — families left without options, providers unable to open or expand, and communities struggling to support working parents. The stakes are too high — for our workforce, our economy, and most importantly, for our kids.

Thank you for your time, and I respectfully urge you to support LD 1428.

District 15: Brooklin, Deer Isle, Eagle Island Township, Frenchboro, Southwest Harbor, Stonington, Swan's Island, Tremont, Isle au Haut, Vinalhaven