

Senator Ingwersen, Representative Meyer and distinguished members of the Health and Human Services Committee, the following people wish to share in testimony to express 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.

LD 1736: An Act to Increase the Supply of Child Care Services Through the Use of Contracts

LD 1736 empowers the Office of Child and Family Services to use contracts—rather than only subsidies—to directly support child care providers in delivering care for high-need populations, including infants and toddlers, children with disabilities, and families in underserved areas.

Why this matters:

- Maine loses an estimated **\$403 million annually** in lost earnings, productivity, and revenue due to child care challenges.
- Infants and toddlers are the most expensive and hardest-to-place age group in child care settings, often requiring higher staff-to-child ratios.
- Contract-based funding offers predictability for providers and ensures consistent availability of slots for priority populations.

This bill is a strategic investment in supply-building and service stability, particularly in rural and low-income communities.

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

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

Why this matters:

- **More than 600 families in Maine** are currently on the waitlist for child care 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 child care 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 child care 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 child care 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 child care workforce by continuing to invest in their **wages, benefits, and educational pathways**.

Families cannot afford child care, 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.

LD 1859: An Act to Improve Access to Child Care and Early Childhood Education by Establishing Regional Resource Hubs

LD 1859 directs the Department of Health and Human Services to establish regional early childhood learning and development resource hubs. These hubs will be affiliated with existing regional nonprofit organizations to promote early childhood learning, support family needs, and increase access to high-quality early childhood education. Key functions include conducting regional needs assessments, assisting parents in locating and applying for child care programs, connecting families to local and state resources, supporting educators, and collaborating with employers and educators to meet local child care needs.

Why this matters:

- **Addressing Child Care Deserts:** Many regions in Maine lack sufficient child care options, making it challenging for families to find quality care. By establishing regional hubs, LD 1859 aims to identify and address these gaps effectively.
- **Supporting Working Families:** With approximately 67% of Maine children under the age of six having all available parents in the workforce, accessible child care is crucial.
- **Enhancing Coordination:** The hubs will serve as centralized points for information and resources, reducing fragmentation and improving service delivery for families and providers alike.

LD 1859 represents a strategic approach to strengthening Maine's early childhood infrastructure, ensuring that families have the support they need to access quality child care and education services.

Conclusion:

Together, these three bills offer a comprehensive response to Maine's child care challenges by strengthening supply, increasing affordability, supporting education, and honoring the workforce. I respectfully urge the committee to vote **"Ought to Pass"** on LD 1878, LD 1934, and LD 1955.

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

This testimony is supported by,

Name	Town	Occupation
Rosalyn Fisher	Bangor	Retired Occupational Therapist
Melissa Holt	Bangor	Owner/Director
Cristina Salois	Whitefield	Agency Director
Gloria aponte clarke	Portland	Public health
Jennifer Burns	Topsham	Head Start Director
Louise Marsden	Portland	Senior VP of Programs
Megan Newsome	Lisbon	Maine state Parent Ambassadors
Kristen King	Windsor	Comprehensive Health Planner II
April Tardiff	Old Orchard Beach	Maine State parent Ambassador
Karrie Breton	Waterville	
Meghann Carrasco	Westbrook,	Executive Director of Seedlings to Sunflowers
Mary Pletcher	Waterville	Stay at home mom
Amanda Hall	CASCO	Director of Riverside Academy
Ingrid Stanchfield	Gardiner	Boys & Girls Clubs of Kennebec Valley CEO
Sara Perrigo	Scarborough	Child Care Center Director
Marsha Demers	Winslow	CTE Early Childhood Instructor
Connor Archer	Bangor	CEO, The Courageous Steps Project / Step Forward Center
Jessie Francis	Waldo Countt	Early Childhood Consultant
Shara Sala	Orland	DEFYMCA Early Learning Site Director
Bridget E. Barden	Hollis Center	Senior Early Childhood Educator
Terri Crocker	Bath	Creative Play Childcare
Missy Bozek	Scarborough	Daycare Teacher Heidi's House Childcare Center

Peter Lindsay	North Yarmouth	Retired
Kassandra Levesque	Bath	Infant/Toddler Early Childhood Educator.
Libbi Wallace	Bath	Pre-school educator
aubrie cobb	bath maine	early childhood education student
Aleka Greeley	Belfast	Belfast area child care services
Aisha Lola	Bath	Early Childhood Education Student
Donna Richardson	Phippsburg	Parent
Alexandra Forrester	Brunswick	Child Care Business Lab Program Developer
Dorena Martin	West Bath	Early Childhood infant educator
Nancy Gahagan	New Gloucester	Childcare
Brittany Foss	Plymouth	Education Supervisor
Tia Zukowski	Gray	Early Childhood Education Instructor
Melissa Harding	Jackson	Maine State Parent Ambassador/Mom of 4
Madeline Tomlin	MONROE	Belfast Area Child Care Services Inc
Jennifer Szantyr	Poland	Child Care Program Director
Kilie laplante	Oxford	Oxford Sacc
Aurora Grondin	South Paris	Childcare provider
Mandi Coffin	Oxford Maine	Oxford School Age and Child Care
Karen Miller	Oxford	Childcare provider
Emily Herrick	Oxford	Infant teacher/ Oxford SACC
Maegan Hewey	Oxford Maine	Oxfords SACC; Toddler teacher
Andrea Gauthier	Oxford	Oxford School Age Child Care
Julli McGray	Oxford, Maine	Oxford SACC
Amy Turner	Oxford	School age child care
Darlene St Onge	Buckfield	Teacher at Oxford SACC
Lexie-Ann Hart	Oxford Maine	Oxford SACC Program
Crystal Mueller	Norway	School Age Child Care
Chelsea Marshall	Norway	Oxford SACC & Preschool
Tessa Moore	Harrison	School age child care provider
Sarah Olson	South Paris	Child care worker
Hailey hall	Oxford Maine	Oxford SACC
Michelle Kennison	West Paris	Preschool Teacher
Emma McPeak	Qxford	Sacc

Erin Lauzier	GRAY	CHILDCARE DIRECTOR
Karley OLeary	Oxford	Oxford SACC
Cassidy Lowell	Oxford	Oxford SACC
Courtney Copeland	Augusta	Office Admin
Amanda McLaughlin	Bar Harbor	ECCP
Ashley Perkins	Oxford	Cook
Louisa Dunlap	Belfast	retired child care director
Diana Parsons	South Paris	Teachet at SACC Program
Vickie Grover	Buckfield	Oxford SACC
Meredith giresi	South Paris	Childcare Worker Oxford SACC
David Motel	Waterville	Maine State Parent Ambassador
Natalie Day	Belfast	Early childhood educator
Lisa Rancoult	Hermon	Maine Parent Ambassador
Joshua Langtry	Saco	Director, Fairy Forest
Barbara Danforth	South Paris	Preschool Teacher
Leifann Higgins	Oxford	Infant teacher Oxford Sacc
Sessa Salas	Camden	Preschool Director
Zachary Grover	Buckfield	Oxford SACC
Tanya Pangakis	Waldo	Belfast Area Child Care Services
Jennifer Trudell	Phippsburg	Business Owner
Paula Ballesteros	Bangor	Faith Linking in Action for chilcare
Tiffany Herrick	Oxford	Oxford Sacc