

Laura Larson
Brunswick
LD 1414

Letter of Testimony

In Support of LD 1414 – An Act to Support and Sustain Maine’s Child Care Workforce

1/19/2026

Senator Henry Ingwersen, Representative Michele Meyers, and Distinguished Members of the Committee on Health and Human Services:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony today. My name is Laura Larson, and I serve as the Executive Director of Family Focus, an early care and education organization serving families across Mid-Coast Maine. Every day, we work closely with infants, toddlers, school-age children, and their families, giving us a front-row view of the challenges and pressures facing Maine’s childcare system.

Through our daily operations and our conversations with parents, educators, and community partners, two issues consistently rise to the surface: the urgent need for affordable, high-quality infant and toddler care, and the lack of reliable childcare options for parents who work second-shift or non-traditional hours. These challenges directly impact family stability, workforce participation, and the well-being of Maine’s youngest children. LD 1414 takes meaningful steps toward addressing both.

The proposal to increase the CCAP base rate bump for infant and toddler care from 10% to 20% would make a substantial difference for programs like ours. Infant and toddler classrooms require the highest staffing ratios, the most specialized training, and the greatest operational costs in our field. A rate adjustment that more accurately reflects the true cost of care would help centers maintain these essential programs, improve recruitment and retention of qualified educators, and ensure that families who need this level of care can continue to access it.

I also appreciate the bill’s forward-thinking approach to planning and developing second-shift childcare. In our region, many families work in health care, manufacturing, hospitality, public safety, and transportation—fields that keep Maine running but require hours outside the traditional childcare day. While the grant program for planning second-shift care is a positive and needed first step, it is important to emphasize that planning alone will not solve the challenges that providers face.

At the same time, while these provisions are a good first step toward addressing shift-care needs, the reality is that the early childhood field cannot stretch any further without true, long-term state investment. Planning grants alone will not overcome Maine’s severe workforce shortages, the need for higher wages to support extended-hour staffing, or the increased supervision and licensing requirements that come with operating beyond traditional hours. Expanding into second-shift care is not as simple as writing a business plan; it requires stable, predictable funding to support the educators who make this work possible. Without a meaningful statewide commitment to supporting the early childhood workforce, it is unrealistic to expect, especially those already operating at a loss during typical daytime hours, to shoulder the additional cost of extended-hour care.

The measures in LD 1414 reflect what we know from experience: children thrive when their caregivers have the resources they need; families thrive when childcare aligns with the realities of their work; and communities thrive when early childhood programs are supported in meeting evolving demands. But to truly meet the needs of Maine’s families, these efforts must be paired with deeper, ongoing investments in the early childhood education profession.

Thank you for your continued commitment to strengthening Maine’s childcare system and for your consideration of the real needs of families and providers. I strongly support the goals of LD 1414 and appreciate the opportunity to share this perspective.

I am happy to answer any questions you may have.

Sincerely,

Laura Larson

Executive Director, Family Focus