



Matthea Elisabeth Larsen Daughtry
President of the Senate

THE MAINE SENATE
132nd Legislature

3 State House Station
Augusta, Maine 04333

**Testimony of Senate President Mattie Daughtry in support of
LD 2066, "An Act to Establish the Child Care Employment Award."
Before the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services
January 21, 2026**

Good morning Senator Ingwersen, Representative Meyer, and esteemed members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services. My name is Mattie Daughtry and I serve as President of the Maine Senate, proudly representing Senate District 23, including Brunswick, Freeport, Harpswell, Pownal, Chebeague Island, and part of Yarmouth. I am honored to speak in favor of LD 2066, "An Act to Establish the Child Care Employment Award."

This summer and fall, I traveled across the state to learn what's working – and what isn't – in Maine's child care system. We heard directly from over 200 parents and educators who shared their optimism about recent legislative efforts to support Maine families, but who were clear that more must be done to stabilize the workforce that makes our entire system possible.

At every one of our tour stops, we heard about the impossible choices that early childhood educators have to make in order to perform this critical work. Teachers shared over and over about the challenge of educating Maine's next generation while struggling to raise their own families. Many shared that their wages are not enough to keep up with the rising cost of living, health insurance, and child care – despite working full time in the very system designed to support families.

Many early educators themselves qualify for the Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP), one of Maine's most important tools for ensuring access to high-quality care. However, too often they find themselves on waitlists or navigating eligibility barriers that make it difficult to secure reliable care for their own children. While this committee continues work to address CCAP access and capacity more broadly, educators need solutions that recognize the unique role they play in our system.

That is why I am proud to cosponsor LD 2066. This bill establishes the Child Care Employment Award to directly support the children of early childhood educators by ensuring they can access the same high-quality care their parents provide every day. By delivering subsidies directly to licensed providers, this program supports both families and the stability of child care programs themselves.

If we want a strong, reliable child care system in Maine, we must support the people who make it possible. When we invest in educators as both professionals and parents, we uplift our entire child care system and strengthen Maine's workforce and economy.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I urge the committee to support LD 2066.