



17 Market Square, South Paris, ME 04281

Victoria Forkus, Managing Director
Maine Community Action
Partnership
c/o Community Concepts, Inc.
17 Market Square
South Paris, ME 04281
207-441-6657

Jason Parent, Executive
Director/CEO
Aroostook County Action Program
771 Main Street
Presque Isle, ME 04769-1116
207-764-3721

James Martin, CEO
Community Concepts, Inc.
240 Bates Street
Lewiston, ME 04240
207-739-6553

Suzanne Walsh, CEO
Kennebec Valley Community Action
Program
101 Water Street
Waterville, ME 04901
207-859-1579

Claire Berkowitz, CEO
Midcoast Maine Community Action
34 Wing Farm Parkway
Bath, ME 04530
207-442-7963

Joe Everett, President and CEO
The Opportunity Alliance
50 Lydia Lane
South Portland, ME 04106
207-523-5055

Kara Hay, President and CEO
Penquis
PO Box 1162
Bangor, ME 04402
207-973-3500

Donna Kelley, President and CEO
Waldo Community Action Partners

9 Field Street
Belfast, ME 04915
207-338-6809

Noelle Coyne, CEO
Western Maine Community Action,
Inc.
PO Box 200
East Wilton, ME 04234-0200
207-743-7763

Carter Friend, CEO
York County Community Action
Corporation
PO Box 72
Sanford, ME 04073
207-324-5762

January 20th, 2025

Re: Testimony in Support of LD 1414 – An Act to Support and Sustain Maine's Child Care Workforce

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

On behalf of the Maine Community Action Partnership (MeCAP) and the Community Action Agencies serving all sixteen counties, I write in strong support of LD 1414, An Act to Support and Sustain Maine's Child Care Workforce. This bill advances a series of steps to stabilize the workforce that reinforces child development, family economic security, and Maine's broader economy.

Maine continues to face significant shortages of qualified early educators, resulting in closed classrooms, under-enrollment, and persistent waitlists, even among highly eligible families. As of December, five classrooms across our state are closed due to staffing constraints, and multiple programs are unable to enroll at their planned capacity. Families who qualify are waiting for services that providers cannot offer without staff.

Nearly **one in four Maine families** lives in what is effectively a child care desert, an area with only one licensed child care slot for every three children under age five. In many rural communities, the shortages are even more severe, leaving parents with no viable options and forcing them to reduce work hours, leave the workforce entirely, or rely on unsafe or unstable arrangements. At the same time, for families who can find a slot, cost remains a major barrier. On average, child care consumes **20–30% of a household's total income**, far exceeding what is considered affordable. The average annual cost of infant care in Maine, **\$11,000 to \$12,000 per year**, is simply out of reach for many low-income and even moderate-income families. This combination of severe scarcity and unaffordability creates a system that is failing families, employers, and the broader economy.

LD 1414 is designed to support and sustain the workforce. The recent amendment language under consideration would target supplements for infant/toddler care and create a planning grant program for overnight care, addressing two of the most acute access gaps for families.

By stabilizing early educators, particularly in infant/toddler care and in hard-to-cover hours, this bill helps keep classrooms open, supports family employment, and strengthens Maine's early childhood infrastructure.

Thank you for your consideration and for your dedication to Maine's children and families. I am happy to provide additional data or program perspectives at the Committee's convenience.

Sincerely,

Victoria D. Forkus

Victoria Forkus
Managing Director

Maine Community Action Partnership (MeCAP)
(M) 207-441-6657