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January 20th, 2025

Re: Testimony in Support of LD 2066 – An Act to Establish the Child Care Employment Award

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), I am writing to express our strong support for LD 2066, An Act to Establish the Child Care Employment Award. This bill represents an urgently needed step toward stabilizing Maine's child care workforce and strengthening the early childhood system that thousands of Maine families rely on. As you know, LD 2066 creates a dedicated Child Care Employment Award to support and retain child care professionals. This tool arrives at a critical moment for Maine's early childhood system.

Child care providers across the state, including Head Start and Early Head Start programs administered by Community Action Agencies, are facing severe staffing shortages that limit their ability to serve children and families. These shortages have direct and immediate consequences. 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.

Families across the state consistently report that the lack of accessible, affordable child care is limiting their ability to work. In fact, **72.9% of Mainers** surveyed in the [2025 Shared Community Health Needs Assessment](#) said their **communities are negatively affected by the shortage of quality, affordable child care.**

The Child Care Employment Award created in LD 2066 addresses these challenges directly. It offers a meaningful, targeted approach to supporting child care professionals, improving retention, and creating a more sustainable workforce pipeline. One of the top reasons educators leave the field is an inability to afford care for their own children. Currently, the program serves 470 families, with 312 on the waitlist, demonstrating a strong and continued demand for these awards.

Thank you for your consideration and for your commitment to Maine's children and families. I would be happy to provide additional information or answer any questions as the Committee deliberates on this important bill.

Sincerely,

Victoria D. Forkus

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