January 21, 2026

To the Esteemed Members of the Health and Human Services Committee:

I am a working mother and childcare director and I am writing in support of LD 2066. I believe that the Employment Award is a proven workforce retention strategy and believe it should be permanent. Maine's child care system depends on a stable, qualified workforce, yet child care employees are among the lowest-paid workers in the state. The Employment Award directly addresses one of the top reasons educators leave the field: inability to afford care for their own children.

As of September 2025, the program supports 511 children from 313 working families, meaning hundreds of child care educators are able to remain employed in licensed programs because of this support. This program has reached full enrollment, with 470 children from 312 families currently on the waitlist. This demonstrates strong demand, confirming the program is meeting a real workforce need, and shows that without continuation, hundreds of educators could lose critical support. Because the waitlist has not moved since October 2024, families are currently unable to access help—even though they remain employed in child care.

The Employment Award smartly blends and braids funding with CCAP. This program is designed to maximize existing public investments, not duplicate them. 62% of participating families are CCAP-eligible and receive child care subsidy, with the Employment Award covering copayments. The average weekly copay covered is approximately $114, a cost that would otherwise fall on low-wage child care workers. 38% of families are ineligible for CCAP but still earn too little to afford care; the Employment Award fills this critical gap. This blended approach stretches CCAP dollars further, ensures subsidy is used first when available, and provides targeted support only where needed.

Additionally, the Employment Award is helping families with children at every stage: 23% infants and toddlers, 35% preschoolers and 42% school-age children. This reflects the realities of the child care workforce, where employees often have multiple children with varying care needs.

Making this program permanent would be a continuation of a successful two-year pilot. The Employment Award has been operating as a time-limited pilot, allowing the state to test design, demand, and implementation. The data shows: Strong uptake, effective coordination with CCAP, as well as significant unmet need. Continuing this legislation allows Maine to build on what is working, rather than dismantling a program that educators and employers now rely on.

If we look at other states, it shows this approach works. Kentucky has implemented categorical child care eligibility for child care workers, ensuring their workforce can access affordable care. Early outcomes from Kentucky and other states demonstrate: Improved recruitment into the child care field, increased retention of experienced educators and greater stability for child care programs serving families statewide. Maine's Employment Award aligns with this proven

strategy, tailored to Maine's subsidy system and workforce needs.

This program also strengthens the entire child care system and Maine's economy. When child care workers can afford care for their own children programs maintain staffing levels, classrooms remain open and parents in all sectors can continue working.

The Employment Award is not just a benefit for educators—it is essential infrastructure that supports Maine's workforce, employers, and economic growth. Please consider voting in favor of LD 2066.

Thank you for your time,

Meghann Carrasco
Executive Director & Founder
Seedlings to Sunflowers Nonprofit Childcare Center
Gorham, ME