

Emma Goltz
Damariscotta
LD 2114

Testimony on LD 2114
An Act Regarding Public Preschool Programs Serving Children Who Are 3 Years of Age

My name is Emma Mae Goltz and I am a lifelong Damariscotta resident, passionate educator, and most recently, a graduate student at University of New England's School of Social Work program. From direct first-hand experience, I know the importance of intentional, high-quality preschool programs in our communities. I started working at Coastal Kid's Preschool (Lincoln County's only NAEYC accredited preschool program) in 2017 as a young adult looking for my own community and I found not only the warmth of support for myself, but also a program that truly puts our community's children and families first. At CKP, we meet families where they are, regardless of what their family looks like or how much money they bring home. This embodiment of inclusive care is what makes CKP so special, not only to me as an educator, but also to our community's families. I know that children with complex disabilities and high needs are cared for with deep care and compassion at CKP, as I have been on the team helping not only the student in the wheelchair with a physical disability, but also the neurodivergent students who are learning how to verbalize for the first time in their lives at age four or five, and together as a team, we celebrate each student's wins.

And yet, I know, this approach and standard of having exceptionally high-quality care for our students and families comes at a significant cost. To maintain CKP's approach of providing this high level of care to our community, there are hours and hours of training that go into all of us as a teaching team, some of which are not paid for, as many of us chose (for the kids) to go above and beyond in order to continue to expand our knowledge about intentional high-quality teaching practices. Beyond the training component, I know that teachers in our county and beyond are not getting the benefits and wages that they deserve. Many of us have four year degrees and some even have masters degrees or beyond, and yet, pay is not high enough and benefits are not comprehensive enough.

So, please, remember to think deeply and thoughtfully about LD 2114. All children deserve to have access to high-quality, intentional, and inclusive programming for childcare, and yet these programs must be thought through carefully, as they not only impact the kids, but also our community's families, our community's structures, and beyond. I thank you for hearing some of my story and CKP's story, and urge you to remember, this is our future.

Sincerely,
Emma Mae Goltz
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