

Kaitie Gilmour
Houlton
LD 2066

Good afternoon, again my name is Kaitie Gilmour I'm a mother of 6 and the owner and director of Laugh and Learn Academy in Houlton where we currently employ 22 full and part time staff. We have four staff members that would qualify for the employment award. Three staff applied for the CCAP CHILD CARE employment award as it first came out. One staff member received a half award, and two of our staff members did not receive any award at all, despite applying as soon as information was released. The last staff member is currently pregnant and will have to leave our facility if she can not get subsidized childcare not only removing her from the workforce but putting a strain on the staff that are left in the classroom. All of this showing the need for LD2066.

Of the two employees that did not receive an employment award we as a business are currently incurring the cost of their childcare spots (6 total). these staff members need to work in order to support their families and are invaluable to us as a childcare center. However they cannot afford childcare for themselves even after utilizing traditional CCAP and it's putting a significant financial strain on our business to cover the cost of their parent fees. This costs us around \$28,808 and could cost us up to \$50,752 a year if they no longer qualify for traditional CCAP or the CCAP employment awards - which has been a very real threat.

Continuing and expanding the employment award would mean we can not only reduce the financial strain we currently endure but also keep an additional staff member and market to potential employee candidates that would not otherwise be able to enter the workforce. These stories are in our center alone but they are not unique to only us. Many childcare's just like ours, are struggling to staff and retain staff in our centers. The employee award is one way that you as a part of the Health and Human Services committee can help support us to provide high quality care.

I ask that you please consider these stories as well as the statements of my colleagues as you make your decision on LD 2066.