



Senator Rotundo, Representative Gattine, Senator Ingwerson, Representative Meyer, and honorable members of the Joint Standing Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs and the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services:

My name is Charlotte Jacobs and I live in Scarborough. I am here today to testify neither for nor against LD 2212.

I am here today on behalf of Maine People's Alliance and its more than 32,000 members — an organization committed to creating a world where everyone has what they need, contributes what they can, and no one is left behind. I serve as the Program Director for one of the two Seedlings to Sunflowers Nonprofit Child Care and Family Centers in Gorham, where we provide essential early education and care for working families across our community.

Today, I am asking the committees to maintain and strengthen funding for CCAP, the Early Childhood Educator Salary Supplement Program, and the Child Care Employment Award.

We are licensed to serve 230 children, but currently enrolled at 144 between two centers — just 63% of capacity. This is not because families do not need care. Rather, it reflects:

- Staffing shortages
- High costs that force families to piece together care
- Workforce turnover
- Funding instability

These factors limit how many classrooms we can safely operate within state ratio requirements. When staffing levels fall below required ratios, classrooms must close — even when families are waiting and space is physically available.

Every week, my administrative team steps into classrooms to cover staffing gaps so families do not lose care. We do this because children and working parents depend on us. But this level of strain is not sustainable without consistent state support.

CCAP Access Gap

We would gladly enroll every eligible CCAP family. We have open seats, yet families remain on waiting lists. We have contacted OCFS, CCAP administrators, and DHHS to ask how the system can better connect families with available classrooms. While agencies cannot endorse specific providers, the system should more effectively coordinate families and programs so that open seats do not sit unused while parents struggle to find care.

Last year, one family lost their CCAP subsidy because their annual paperwork was not processed within the state's timeline. Once payments stopped, the family immediately began



accruing full tuition charges, which quickly became unmanageable. Despite our efforts to work with them on a payment plan, they ultimately had to withdraw their child — just months before graduating from our Pre-K program.

That child lost stability. That parent lost reliable care. A family doing everything right fell through the cracks because the system failed to be flexible.

Over recent years, Maine has invested in child care by:

- Expanding CCAP eligibility
- Funding salary supplements for early childhood educators
- Supporting the Child Care Employment Award

However, the Governor's FY26 supplemental budget does not include additional dedicated investment to clear CCAP waitlists or expand access. It proposes reductions to the Salary Supplement Program and elimination of the Child Care Employment Award.

These changes risk forcing educators out of the field, closing classrooms, and reducing access to care just when Maine families need it most. When classrooms close:

- Parents lose jobs or reduce work hours
- Employers lose workers
- Children lose stability and early learning opportunities
- Providers operate below licensed capacity

Child care is not a luxury— it is an essential public good. It is workforce infrastructure, a cornerstone of our economy, and fundamental to family stability.

We are doing everything we can to rebuild and stabilize. But without sustained investment, stability will slip out of reach for families who are already stretched thin. I urge you to raise the revenue necessary, reject following the example of Trump's unpopular tax cuts on the super-wealthy, and include LD 1089, LD 229, and LD 1879 — or stronger measures in the final budget.

Families are doing their part. Providers are doing our part. Now we need the state to do its part so no child, parent, or educator is left behind.

We respectfully urge these committees to maintain and strengthen funding for CCAP, the Early Childhood Educator Salary Supplement Program, and the Child Care Employment Award so Maine families, children, and providers can thrive.

Thank you for your consideration.

