



STATE OF MAINE  
GOVERNOR'S OFFICE OF POLICY INNOVATION AND THE FUTURE  
181 STATE HOUSE STATION  
AUGUSTA, MAINE  
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**Testimony of Ana Hicks, Policy Director for Human Services  
Governor's Office of Policy Innovation and the Future**

**Before the Joint Standing Committees on Appropriations and Financial Affairs and  
Health and Human Services**

**LD 258 An Act Making Unified Appropriations and Allocations from the General Fund  
and Other Funds for the Expenditures of State Government and Changing Certain  
Provisions of the Law Necessary to the Proper Operations of State Government for the  
Fiscal Years Ending June 30, 2023, June 30, 2024 and June 30, 2025**

**February 21, 2023**

Good Morning, Senator Rotundo, Representative Sachs, and members of committees on Appropriations and Financial Affairs and Health and Human Services, my name is Ana Hicks and I am the Policy Director for Human Services in the Governor's Office of Policy Innovation and the Future (GOP). I am here today to testify in support of LD 258, specifically the small amount of funding for the Children's Cabinet on Early Childhood Advisory Council.

This budget advances the Governor's guiding belief that to build a stronger, more prosperous state where opportunity is available to all. We must invest in the infrastructure that supports the people of Maine, our greatest asset. That is why this budget proposal strengthens the very things that Maine people rely on every day to succeed, building on the strong success of the currently enacted budget and the incredible work from the last legislative session, to tackle Maine's greatest challenges. We have governed cautiously and in a fiscally prudent way over the past four years, making sure that - even in the hardest of times during the pandemic we lived within our means. This budget proposal continues that practice. We look forward to the discussions over the next several months as we outline each initiative and impact of the proposed investments.

In 2019, Governor Mills established the Governor's Office of Policy Innovation and the Future (GOPIF) to address critical, long-term issues facing Maine, by engaging state agencies, stakeholders and the public in the planning and implementation of innovative, data-driven policy solutions. The office's current leadership areas include: climate and energy policy, including the Maine Climate Council; opioid response and prevention; the Governor's Children's Cabinet and Cabinet on Aging; housing, economic innovation, workforce development and anti-hunger policy.

In my role in GOPIF, I coordinate the work of the Children's Cabinet and staff the Children's Cabinet Early Childhood Advisory Council (CCECAC). The Children's Cabinet Early Childhood Advisory Council (CCECAC) was established by the Maine legislature in the spring of 2019 to advise the newly reinstated Children's Cabinet. The CCECAC is focused on the implementation of early childhood policy and programming to support the effective delivery of services and education to young children from birth to 3rd grade in the state. In addition, the

CCECAC serves as the State Advisory Council on Early Childhood Education and Care and in that role, the Council is responsible for ensuring statewide coordination and collaboration among the wide range of early childhood programs and services in the State.

Members of the CCECAC include legislators and individuals representing business, philanthropy, public health, child welfare and the early care and education field including family child care, center-based child care and Head Start. We also have parent representatives on the council. Four ex-officio members represent the Department of Health and Human Services and Department of Education. I have attached the list of current members to this testimony. We are waiting on the Speaker and the Senate President to make new legislative appointments to the Council.

The Council meets monthly. During the pandemic, the members of the CCECAC met remotely, but in 2023, the CCECAC plans to host in-person meetings as well as potentially host meetings to hear directly from parents and early childhood educators. The small amount of funding that the Council receives annually ensures that we can reimburse parent and child care representatives for their travel to and from meetings. These monthly meetings provide an important opportunity for the CCECAC to weigh in with DHHS and DOE staff who participate in the work of the Children's Cabinet.

Just as a reminder, the Governor's Children's Cabinet is comprised of five Commissioners who oversee programming and policies for children and/or youth. Maine Children's Cabinet members include the Commissioners of the Departments of Health and Human Services, Education, Labor, Public Safety, and Corrections. DHHS Commissioner Jeanne Lambrew serves as chair of the Children's Cabinet. The Children's Cabinet plays a vital role in convening and facilitating coordination across State agencies on initiatives and policies that will improve and promote the healthy development of children and youth in Maine. Staff from the Departments comprising the Children's Cabinet meet regularly to maintain open communication about changes and developments in programming and policies across state agencies for children and youth, coordinate the implementation of specific strategies, and identify new opportunities to collaborate across programs to advance the Children's Cabinet's strategies and goals.

The Cabinet has two overarching goals. The first to ensure that all Maine children enter kindergarten prepared to succeed. The second is to ensure that all Maine youth enter adulthood connected to the workforce and/or education. High level staff from across the agencies meet regularly to

The Cabinet works closely with the CCECAC on its three areas of focus for early childhood which include:

- Increase access to affordable early care and education, preventive and early intervention services for young children and their families.
- Raise the quality of our early care and education system and support families to access quality programming.
- Recruit, prepare and retain a diverse early childhood workforce.

As the official State Advisory Council on Early Childhood Education and Care, the council is required to provide input and feedback on the child care market rate survey that helps to set the rates for the Child Care Subsidy Program and the Maine's plan to the federal government for its Child Care Development Fund. The Office of Child and Family Services also sought input from the CCECAC as well as other stakeholders as it built its plan for the increased federal funding for child care from the American Rescue Plan.

The Children's Cabinet Early Childhood Advisory Council plays a critical role in providing ongoing feedback and input as the state implements several key cross agency initiatives that are part of the Cabinet's plan for young children. Some of these include:

- Expansion and implementation of a statewide early childhood mental health consultation program by the Office of Child and Family Services. The Early Childhood Consultation Partnership is an evidence-based, time-limited, and intensive consultation service that helps child care providers, educators, and caregivers of young children to build both an understanding of the social-emotional needs of children and the skills to meet those needs. All services are provided at no cost to providers and families. Mental health consultants trained in the ECCP® model work directly with child care staff, educators, public school teachers and the child's caregiver(s) to identify and implement strategies to support children's emotional wellbeing and effectively manage challenging behavior that may otherwise jeopardize a child's ability to participate in an early childhood education setting.
- Implementation of Help Me Grow, a care coordination model to connect pregnant people and parents/caregivers with young children through age 8 with the services and resources to support young children to grow up healthy and thriving. In November 2022, the Office of Child and Family Services officially launched Help Me Grow. HMG is a care coordination model currently used in 28 states that utilizes and builds on existing resources to develop and enhance a comprehensive approach to early childhood system-building. Help Me Grow supports families, providers, and communities by implementing four key components:
  - Centralized telephone access point for connection of children and their families to services and care coordination
  - Community and family outreach to promote the use of HMG and to provide networking opportunities among families and service providers.
  - Child health provider outreach to support early detection and early intervention
  - Data collection and analysis to understand all aspects of the HMG system, including the identification of gaps and barriers.
- Expansion of public Pre-K for four-year old children in Maine. Public pre-K for four-year old children is an important component of a mixed delivery system for early childhood care and education for children from birth through age five. With the support of the Maine Jobs and Recovery Plan's pre-K expansion grants and other federal funding, the number of pre-K classrooms expanded in the fall of 2022 with 8 School Administrative Units (SAU) starting new public pre-K programs and another 13 SAUs

expanding their public pre-K programs to reach more students. Public pre-K enrollment numbers for Fall 2022 are at an all-time high at 6,238 enrolled students--more than 50% of all 4-year-old children. In December 2022 and January 2023, DOE announced another 22 School Administrative Units had been awarded grants to build out new programming for the fall of 2023. The CCECAC has supported and advocated for efforts by the Early Learning Team at the Department of Education to incentivize more partnerships between schools and community programs such as child care and Head Start programs and to incentivize more schools to move from part-day, part-time programs to full day, full week programs to improve quality and better meet the needs of families.

Over the next three years, the CCECAC will advise the Children's Cabinet and staff from DHHS and DOE on the implementation of the Preschool Development Grant (B-5) Renewal Grant from the US Department of Health and Human Services. The grant will provide the state with \$8 million per year for three years. The grant will support the state to build needed infrastructure and capacity to create a more coordinated, efficient, and high-quality mixed delivery system for children ages birth to five and their families, targeting key needs surfaced in the initial PDG needs assessment. The plan for the grant builds upon the successful cross agency work of the Children's Cabinet to ensure that all children enter kindergarten prepared to succeed.

In the first year of the grant, the state plans to implement several initiatives to strengthen programming within Maine's early childhood system including:

- Enhancing the Help Me Grow System to increase access to critical resources for underserved children, including multilingual families with young children.
- Studying opportunities for public pre-K expansion through pilot projects to test new designs that will increase access to public Pre-K through community partnership models.
- Supporting improvements and aligning quality in all of Maine's child care assistance programs.
- Piloting First 10 Schools and Communities in 6 School Administrative Units to increase collaboration and coordination between local early childhood education systems and public elementary schools to strengthen instruction, learning and transitions across these systems for children and families and to improve connection to resources and supports for families with young children.
- Funding to support the infrastructure and capacity for the full implementation of an Early Childhood Integrated Data System.

The Children's Cabinet Early Childhood Advisory Council monthly meetings provide an opportunity for staff working on the key initiatives of the Children's Cabinet to hear and learn directly from legislators, policy experts and professionals working with young children and families and parents. This on-going feedback and input make our initiatives stronger and more responsive to the needs of families and children and professionals working to support the healthy development of our youngest Mainers.

## **Members of the Children's Cabinet Early Childhood Advisory Council:**

### **A. Two Members of the Maine Senate**

- Senator Matthea Daughtry, Cumberland County, District 24
- Senator Marianne Moore, Washington County, District 6

### **B. Two Members of the House of Representatives**

- Representative Rebecca Millett, Cape Elizabeth, District 30
- Representative Laurel Libby, Auburn, District 64

### **C. The Governor or her designee:**

- Ana Hicks, Children's Cabinet Coordinator

### **D. One person representing parents of young children:**

- Mary-Gene Rumery, Educare's Parent Ambassador Program

### **E. Two persons with experience in public funding and philanthropy:**

- Jennifer Beck, Senior Program Associate, John T. Gorman Foundation and Chair of the Early Childhood Funders Group
- Colleen Quint, President and CEO, Alfond Scholarship Foundation

### **F. One person representing child abuse and neglect prevention:**

- Dana-Michelle LaPlante, Care Manager, The Aroostook Medical Center

### **G. One person representing postsecondary education:**

- Donna Karno, Associate Professor of Early Childhood Education, University of Maine, Farmington

### **H. Three persons representing statewide, membership or constituent organizations that advance the well-being of young children and their families:**

- Annie Colaluca, Director of the Enrichment Preschool Program at the Bath Area Family YMCA on behalf of Maine AEYC
- Sue Powers, Head Start Director at Aroostook County Action Program, Presque Isle on behalf of the Head Start Association
- Rita Furlow, Maine Children's Alliance

### **I. Two persons representing family child care providers:**

- Chrissie Davis, Bouncing Bubbles Child Care, Skowhegan
- Sasha Shunk, Shunk Child Care, Portland

### **J. One person representing a business roundtable on early childhood investment:**

- Jeremy Fischer, Leadership Team member, Maine Early Learning Investment Group

**K. One person with expertise in children's health or public health:**

- Dr. Christopher Motyl, DO, Pediatrician, Maine Chapter American Academy of Pediatrics

**L. Two ex officio nonvoting members who are employees of the Department of Education and direct or work in programming that affects young children:**

- Stacie McCoy, Head Start State Collaboration Director, Early Learning Team
- Nicole Madore, Early Childhood Specialist, Early Learning Team

**M. Two ex officio nonvoting members who are employees of the Department of Health and Human Services and direct or work in programming that affects young children:**

- Elissa Wynne, Associate Director of Early Care and Education, Office of Child and Family Services
- Amy Belisle, Chief Child Health Officer, Commissioner's Office