



**maineaeYC**

Maine Association for the  
Education of Young Children

Testimony of Heather Marden

On behalf of the Maine Association for the Education of Young Children

In support of LD 1442 An Act to Recognize an Association of Early Childhood Educators as an  
Educational Advisory Organization

4/25/23

Senator Nangle, Representative Stover and distinguished members of the the State and Local  
Government Committee, my name is Heather Marden, Co-Executive Director of the Maine  
Association for the Education of Young Children (MaineAEYC).

*MaineAEYC promotes high-quality early learning for each and every child, birth through age 8,  
by connecting practice, policy, and research. We advance a diverse, dynamic early childhood  
profession and support all who care for, educate, and work on behalf of young children.*

MaineAEYC is a membership organization with over 550 members across Maine. The majority  
of these members work in early childhood educational settings including child care centers,  
Head Starts, and family child care.

Recognizing MaineAEYC as an educational advisory organization to support its members opens  
up opportunities for more local support of early childhood programming and educators such as  
potential long term solutions including public investments for pooled child care educator benefits  
such as health insurance, retirement funds, etc.

As the child care crisis looms and affects Mainers in every municipality, more and more towns,  
cities, and counties are looking for long term solutions to reduce child care loss, expand child  
care options and retain and grow the early childhood educator workforce. Expanding ways in  
which municipalities may play a role in financing and supporting early childhood education  
allows for more local, creative solutions.

MaineAEYC has been established as the only membership organization in Maine that focuses  
solely on children and educational settings for ages birth through age 8. Our organization has  
been operating in Maine for 19 years and has continued to expand and grow. The pandemic  
highlighted the need for early childhood representation across the state.

We support a program called Building Bridges which has worked in several Maine communities  
to bring local partners to the table including public school administrators and educators, child  
care providers including family child care, Head Start, centers, and special education partners.  
This program is aimed at improving the communication and collaboration for young children in

the community. As a result, public pre-K partnerships have been established to serve children in all types of community settings supporting the needs of school districts, children, working families, and community programs. More municipalities are showing interest in this type of facilitated support and two new contracts will be developed in communities for 2023-2024.

A big indicator of educator turnover in the child care field is lack of benefits specifically around health insurance. As a recognized educational advisory organization, MaineAEYC could carve a path down the road to provide pooled health insurance and open up the door for public support in those benefits provided. Less than half of Maine's child care programs can afford to offer a health insurance benefit due to the business model of child care and the difficulty operating on razor thin margins. Child care programs cannot compete with benefits packages in the general labor force. As MaineAEYC looks at how we can play a role in bringing better benefits to the field, we hope adding us in statute reduces barriers in the long term to receiving support.

Thank you for your time and consideration of passing this legislation.