



## Maine Education Association

Grace Leavitt President | Jesse Hargrove Vice President | Beth French Treasurer  
Rebecca Cole NEA Director | Rachelle Bristol Executive Director

### Testimony

### In Support

#### **LD 1520: Resolve, Directing the Department of Education and Department of Health and Human Services to Study Placing Child Care Facilities in Secondary Schools**

**John Kosinski, Government Relations Director, Maine Education Association**

**Before the Education and Cultural Affairs Committee**

**May 1, 2023**

Senator Rafferty, Representative Brennan and other esteemed members of the Education and Cultural Affairs Committee,

My name is John Kosinski (he/him), and I am proud to serve as the Director of Government Relations for the Maine Education Association (MEA). The MEA represents 24,000 educators in the state of Maine, including teachers and other professionals in nearly every public school in the state and faculty and other professional staff in the University of Maine and Community College Systems.

I am here today to testify on behalf of the MEA in support of LD 1520, *Resolve, Directing the Department of Education and Department of Health and Human Services to Study Placing Child Care Facilities in Secondary Schools*.

As far as we are aware, the Falmouth Public School system is the only school system in the state providing on-site childcare. Teachers and school employees tell us they love this program, and anecdotally we have heard the on-site childcare in the Falmouth schools is a recruitment tool for educators. In the Falmouth public school system, employees pay for this service, but educators are more than willing to pay for on-site or at least in-district childcare. They gain peace of mind knowing their young children may be cared for in the building where they work, or at the nearby school. It is important to note, in the Falmouth childcare program priority is given to the children of students. Then slots are provided for employees of the school district who are parents and then employees who may have grandchildren. We support this Resolve to better research and understand how to replicate this service in more communities. We think this can be a great recruitment tool, especially for new parents.

However, we have a few suggestions for the current version of this bill.

First, the bill specifically cites childcare options in "secondary schools." The Falmouth program I just spoke of is housed in the elementary school and we would encourage the Resolve focus on public schools, not just secondary schools. For example, Sec 3.A of the bill states the study should focus on "Serving children of secondary school staff and employees who are infants, toddlers and preschool children . . ." but we suggest this language should be expanded to include the children of all employees of public schools.

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Second, much like the model in Falmouth, we suggest priority be granted to the children of students. We know teenage pregnancy can result in students struggling to graduate from high school given the disruption to their school schedule and the newfound demands of raising a baby. We have made progress in reducing teenage pregnancy, but we know, despite our best efforts, some students will still get pregnant, and we believe these individuals should have first right of access to public school childcare facilities.<sup>1</sup>

Third, we are concerned the intent of this bill is to encourage more high school students to consider a career in early childhood education. Generally, we support this concept. However, we must point out that many of our CTE regions and centers already provide early childhood education pathways for students. Of the 26 CTE regions and centers in the state, twenty of them provide early childhood as a subject, and nearly all if not all provide on-site childcare for students to practice what they are learning under the supervision of a teacher or instructor. I know – my son attended an early childhood program at my local CTE center.

We want to caution against viewing this bill as a vehicle for addressing early childhood workforce shortages. We believe the shortages are related to the low wages and inadequate benefits. This work can and should be rewarding. But it also should not lead one to a career of making poverty wages. If we are serious about addressing the shortage of early childhood educators, we do not believe childcare centers in high schools will be the solution. Higher wages and better benefits are the solution.

Thank you for your time and your service to the people of Maine. I will do my best to answer any questions you may have.

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<sup>1</sup> According to the 2023 Kids Count Data Book provided by the Maine Children's Alliance and the Annie E. Casey Foundation: In 2021, of the 12,001 births in Maine, 301 were to females ages 10 -19, or 2.5% of all births. This represents a decrease from 2020, (396 births to teens) and 2019, (340 teen births).

In 2021, the counties with the highest rate of births to females under age 20 were Somerset, Washington and Piscataquis with rates of 5.4%, 5.1% and 4.5% of all births respectively. All three counties had lower rates than the previous year, though. By contrast, the rate in Cumberland County for teen births was 1.0% and York County was also under 2 percent at 1.7%. For numbers of teen births, rather than rates, Androscoggin had the most teen births in 2021 at 49.

Found here: [Births to teenage mothers 2018-2021 | KIDS COUNT Data Center \(aecf.org\)](#)

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