



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

2 STATE HOUSE STATION
AUGUSTA, MAINE 04333-0002

(207) 287-1400

TTY: MAINE RELAY 711

Cheryl A. Golek

9 Vicarage Lane

Harpswell, ME 04079

Phone: (207) 535-9857

Cheryl.golek@legislature.maine.gov

Testimony of Rep. Cheryl Golek introducing
LD 1520, Resolve, Directing the Department of Education and Department of Health and Human Services to Study Placing Child Care Facilities in Secondary Schools
Before the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs

Senator Rafferty, Representative Brennan and distinguished members of the Education and Cultural Affairs Committee, my name is Cheryl Golek and I represent House District 99 which consists of the Town of Harpswell and part of Brunswick. I come before you to introduce **LD 1520, Resolve, Directing the Department of Education and Department of Health and Human Services to Study Placing Child Care Facilities in Secondary Schools** for your consideration.

This Resolve will direct the Department of Education and the Department of Health and Human Services to jointly study placing childcare facilities in secondary schools. Maine families are struggling to find available quality care, and providers are struggling to attract and retain their workforce. The need for childcare in our state cannot be understated. Our childcare providers are the workforce behind our workforce and the backbone of our economy.

Many issues face our childcare providers today, from pay to workforce shortages. Maine parents are seeking childcare to return to the workforce or continue school are struggling with access and cost. Before the COVID-19 pandemic, Maine needed more childcare options and during the pandemic, Maine lost hundreds of childcare facilities. While many have reopened, they are struggling to keep adequate staff.

We must begin to think outside the box when it comes to providing childcare in our state and parents in our state deserve affordable solutions. The educational systems and businesses in our state need childcare for their employees to function. Our state's economy needs childcare to grow.

There are several goals of this bill:

First, it would provide an on-site training center for secondary school students in child development and childcare courses involving the developmental stages of infants, toddlers, and preschool children; a program like this would provide an early childcare education experience for students that could lead to a certificate at graduation in early childcare education or a basic

early childcare education credit to continue their education in this field. I would hope that this could be interconnected with our community colleges for continuing education beyond high school.

Second, is to provide nurturing, quality childcare, and age-appropriate learning experiences in a safe and secure environment for infants, toddlers, and preschool children. According to the Maine KIDS COUNT report for 2023, it highlights the long-term benefits of quality, early learning experiences. Programs that begin at birth lead to better outcomes for children and yield up to a 13 percent annual return on public investment.¹

Third, this would provide quality childcare for secondary school staff and employees. This would help fill the workforce shortage gaps within our public education system. Our school districts have employee shortages from teachers to Ed Techs and food service and maintenance to bus drivers. If there was an option for quality childcare as an employee incentive, this would help fill the workforce shortage gaps. A program like this would also open childcare spots currently filled to allow others waiting for childcare the ability to return to the workforce or studies.

Finally, this would create a source of early childhood educators and caregivers to help reduce the shortage of childcare workers in the state. It is estimated that 50,000 children under the age of six in our State need full-time childcare.²

Maine is facing several crises at once, and several are connected at the hip. Our childcare shortage is related to our workforce shortage. We cannot build one without the other. We as a state must work to fix these together to create the long-term solution our state so desperately needs, and the Maine people deserve.

LD 1520 opens an opportunity for us to create long-term changes needed in our state to step towards addressing our state's childcare needs. It will prepare participating students with adequate skills and knowledge of correct childcare techniques for the home and workplace.

Thank you for your time and consideration on this bill and I would be happy to answer any questions you have.

¹ Maine Children's Alliance (2023). *2023 MAINE KIDS Data Book*. Pg. 39. Retrieved from <https://mainechildrensalliance.org/site/assets/files/2024/databook2023highlights.pdf>

² *Id.* at pg. 39.