



Cameron Reny
Senator, District 13

THE MAINE SENATE
131st Legislature

3 State House Station
Augusta, Maine 04333

Testimony of Senator Cameron Reny
**Supporting LD 1726, “An Act to Build Maine’s Economy by Supporting Child
Care for Working Families”**

*Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services
May 10, 2023*

Senator Baldacci, Representative Meyer, and honorable members of the Joint Standing Committee On Health and Human Services, I am Senator Cameron Reny, and I represent Senate District 13, which includes most of Lincoln County and the towns of Washington and Windsor. I am here today to testify in strong support of LD 1726, “An Act to Build Maine’s Economy by Supporting Child Care for Working Families.”

First, I want to thank President Jackson for sponsoring this essential bill. As a mother and school counselor, I understand firsthand the vital role child care plays in the lives of Maine families and our economy.

Child care is the backbone of our workforce, enabling parents to work, contribute to our economy, and provide for their families. Unfortunately, our current child care system falls short of meeting the needs of our children, families, and businesses.

Insufficient child care options have negatively impacted businesses across the state, from small local shops to large employers. Many workers, particularly women, have had to reduce their work hours or leave the workforce altogether due to a lack of affordable and accessible child care. This challenge hinders our economy from meeting its full potential.

The lack of child care has been especially difficult for families in rural areas, where a significant number of Mainers live in child care “deserts.” The costs of child care are overwhelming for many families, often exceeding the cost of housing or college tuition. I am someone fortunate enough to be able to afford childcare costs in my rural area, however, I still struggled to find placements for my children when they reached an age they could legally go to a childcare facility. I ended up having to take extra time off work while waiting for an open slot. This combination is a financial burden on our families.

The consequences of not addressing this issue extend beyond the immediate impact on Maine's economy. This bill plays a critical role in fostering child development by investing in high-quality early care and education programs. The first few years of life are incredibly important, developmentally speaking. By increasing funding for Head Start programs and supporting child care providers, LD 1726 ensures that our youngest citizens have access to safe and nurturing learning environments.



Cameron Reny
Senator, District 13

THE MAINE SENATE
131st Legislature

3 State House Station
Augusta, Maine 04333

These child-care centers are staffed by well-trained educators who foster warm and loving relationships between caregivers and children. These kinds of relationships are crucial for building self-confidence, resilience, and communication skills. The people providing these services deserve fair compensation for their services. I've spoken with many early childcare providers who are consummate professionals, love their jobs, and still have regular doubts about their choice of career due to the wages. One who works with my children wonders if she'll ever be able to move out of her parent's house if she stays in this profession.

LD 1726 takes necessary steps towards addressing these challenges by increasing funding and support for child care providers, expanding subsidy eligibility for families, and investing in early childhood education programs like Head Start. Additionally, this bill creates a scholarship program for child care providers' children, establishes an independent appeals process for licensing decisions, and requires an annual report to the legislature on increasing subsidy enrollment and reducing barriers to participation.

We have a child care crisis in our state. We must provide better paths for child care workers to receive professional development and fair compensation. As it stands, early child care teachers earn significantly less than other teachers, which contributes to poor staff retention and a struggle to hire qualified providers. By increasing wage supplements and investing in professional development, LD 1726 will help ensure that our children receive the best care possible from highly skilled educators.

In conclusion, LD 1726 is essential not only for the well-being of our children and families but also for the growth and sustainability of Maine's economy. I urge you to support this bill and help build a better future for Maine's working families and the communities they call home.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I'm happy to answer any questions you may have.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Cameron Reny".

Cameron Reny
State Senator, District 13
Representing Lincoln County and the towns of Washington and Windsor