

Testimony of Kasey McBlais
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In support of
LD 1726 An Act to Build Maine's Economy by Supporting Child Care and Working Families

Senator Baldacci, Representative Meyer, and distinguished members of the Health and Human Services Committee, my name is Kasey Marie McBlais and I am a mother of two beautiful children. I'm testifying in support of LD 1726 An Act to Build Maine's Economy by Supporting Child Care and Working Families.

I have two children. Remington is 5 now and miss Fiona will be 3 in July. In August of 2022 we were told that my son Remington, could no longer attend the inclusive full time preschool/childcare center that he had been attending for the previous 11 months.

Remi was having increasingly challenging behaviors and was requiring almost constant one on one support. Several Ed Tech's left the center and so they were no longer able to support Remi. We had two weeks to find another place for him.

After scrambling we were able to enroll him into a two day/week public preK program with fingers crossed that it would be a good fit. This meant that I had to stop working full time and drop down to twenty hours a week, in order to stay home with Remi on the days he was not in school. It's been 8 months since I made that decision and I continue to work just part time. I've had a job I love, recruiting foster and adoptive families for 7 years. Dropping down to part time meant we lost our medical, dental and vision insurance. Nor do I earn sick time or paid time off anymore.

My choice was this: try to find childcare that was accessible (I live in rural Oxford county), try to find childcare that was of high quality (Remi was diagnosed with Autism and ADHD last summer), OR drop down to part time so that I could provide him with that childcare myself. I chose the latter because I used to be a BHP and an Ed Tech III. I used to work with children in therapeutic foster care. The fact is, there isn't a childcare center within an hour from us that I feel confident in being able to provide Remi with the quality, specialized care that he requires in order to thrive and be successful. This was a difficult decision but in the end I chose to sacrifice my career and our financial stability so that I could ensure Remi would get the kind of care he needs and deserves.

It makes me wonder how many other families are having to make these difficult decisions? And how many of those are actually the same professionals and educators that my family is seeking for Remington? Providers are underpaid, adding to the instability of the child care supply. Threatening the few resources that currently exist for Maine's families will only make this crisis of child care worse.

The importance of comprehensive family resources and access to affordable, high-quality child care services cannot be overstated. When we invest in these services, we invest in our state's economy. We improve the quality of life for children and enable more parents to return to work. Without this bill, countless will have to continue choosing between their work or caring for their children.

I'm asking no, I'm urging you to support this bill. If childcare professionals and educators were being paid a livable wage then my Remi may have been able to stay at the center we loved. He likely would not have been kicked out due to lack of staffing. This bill will improve Maine's childcare system which will then in turn, strengthen our economy.

Maine children should mean more than a paycheck. Remington and Fiona should mean more than the next election cycle. They are literally our future and if we don't start investing in children and families now, then I really do fear for the future of Maine.