

Good Morning Senator Baldacci, Representative Meyer and distinguished members of the Health and Human Services Committee

My Name is Tim Sutter and I am speaking in support of LD 1726 an Act to Build Maine's Economy by Supporting Child Care and Working Families

I have worked at Bath Iron Works for 25 years and counting I am a union member of Machinists Local S6 and the Chairman of our Legislative Committee Local S6 represents 4,300 working men and women at BIW I have heard the many issues surrounding child care directly from my co-workers Workers trying to raise families and balance childcare is harder than ever BIW is continuing on hiring more employees this year, but a big hurdle I see in the recruitment and retention of new employees is the child care crisis we have in this state In midcoast Maine the issues include extensive waitlists at area programs and some programs often don't provide the necessary hours needed, as most don't open until 7 or later and close by 5 then there comes the cost which averages around 275/wk in the midcoast area How can we grow our communities if workers don't have access to daycare, can't afford daycare, and are forced to pass on working to raise their kids instead

Personally I have dealt with childcare issues over the years I have a 16 year old son who started daycare at 1 years old I was a single father with primary custody of my son, fortunately I moved to Bath close to my job and in the neighborhood of creative play daycare I can't explain to you what that day care means to me and my child They were my family support system They are like family and one of the biggest parts of our community Daycares like hers allow our community to work and raise children in a caring social and educational environment with other children building the communities we live in stronger It was a real struggle for me keeping up with the cost of daycare and trying to raise my son We desperately need more facilities and people like her

My partner Sara and I had a girl together in 2016 Sara works for LL Bean so we found day care for my daughter in Freeport after being on several waitlists That daycare closed in 2018, luckily we were on a waitlist since 2016 at another daycare when one spot opened up after we had been stressing over it for months, but the price increased Then Covid-19 hit and that daycare closed and never reopened after weeks of paying to hold her spot because nobody knew what was going to happen Sara was able to work from home during that time as we had no idea what we were going to do with my daughter As the pandemic went on more places closed and we encountered more waitlists When she was getting ready to start Kindergarten Sara was needing to transition back to the office and luckily was able to work a hybrid schedule in and out of the office before finding a before and after program last school year which she now attends Now we have the stress again of what to do for the summer between us taking vacation time working from home a couple days a week and being able to have her spend time with my mother or Sara's mother and doing a couple weeks of day camps, we really still have no idea The stress is beyond unbearable on working families trying to figure out daycare solutions Add that with inflation on gas and groceries and then the cost of child care and it is not manageable not for our family and certainly not for those starting out in jobs like ours making less money

When working people have to not work because they can't find or afford childcare that creates problems in our communities, in businesses, and affects our whole State. We have to recognize what has happened to the childcare industry especially since the COVID pandemic or businesses will continue to have staffing problems. Workers will continue to struggle with balancing childcare and work. We need to promote Child Care Workers as without Child Care Workers we have no workers. I urge you to act now. That is why I am here today asking for your support on LD1726. Thank you.

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