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Maine Community Action Partnership and the Maine Head Start Directors' Association Support LD 1726 An Act to Build Maine's Economy by Supporting Child Care and Working Families

May 10, 2023

Senator Baldacci, Representative Meyer, members of the Committee on Health and Human Services, I am Megan Hannan, Executive Director of the Maine Community Action Partnership and the Advocacy Director for the Maine Head Start Directors' Association, and we support LD 1726 An Act to Build Maine's Economy by Supporting Child Care and Working Families

Our state's greatest resource is our people, and our state's policies shape people's possibilities. In Community Action, we create conditions that invite children to learn and adults to apply their skills, tapping into the hidden potential in our communities. Through our Whole Family approach, we build a family's capacity for sustained stability and economic growth. We invest in the family's well-being, we let them drive their own story, and we have tangible success.

At its very heart, early childhood education is the foundation of a child's future. Proven programming like we have in Head Start is an intervention to poverty later in life – for the children as the age and for the parents, who share in the supports Head Start provides. Our classroom teachers, education technicians and nutritionists all take pride in their work and their families, they love their work and do it out of that love.

Which is a good thing, because now, more than ever, they can work for more money, with less stress and certainty without cleaning up after rambunctious children every day at a nearby coffee shop, big box retailer or local shop. This bill would help to rectify this situation in a few ways: by doubling the current monthly wage supplement we are able to pay our educators, by professionalizing our dedicated and well-educated work force – caring for and educating our children is a calling, certainly, and also a legitimate and necessary profession, and by strengthening our overall early childhood education system, meaning more children are school ready by first grade.

The success of Maine's Head Start classrooms and Pre-K partnerships mean the success of Maine's families, communities and workforce. LD 1726 does this and more, and is part of the larger solution we are grasping with in Maine: child and family well-being, reducing neglect and abuse, and strengthening and building strong systems for strong families.

I ask you to also carefully read the electronically submitted testimony of Sue Powers, my MeCAP colleague and long time early education expert, which is much more detailed in the affects these changes will have on early education in Maine.

Thank you for your time and attention.

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