

131st Legislature
Senate of
Maine
Senate District 23

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Testimony of Senator Mattie Daughtry supporting
**LD 2199, An Act to Ensure Subsidy Reimbursements and Emergency Financial Assistance
for Certain Child Care Providers**
Before the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services
February 20, 2024

Senator Baldacci, Representative Meyer, and Esteemed Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services, my name is Mattie Daughtry, and I proudly represent Senate District 23, which includes Brunswick, Freeport, Harpswell, Pownal, Chebeague Island, and part of Yarmouth. Today, I am pleased to offer testimony in strong support of LD 2199, “An Act to Ensure Subsidy Reimbursements and Emergency Financial Assistance for Certain Child Care Providers.”

Last session, I was very proud to support President Jackson’s initiative to double the stipends for child care workers. When the Governor included this initiative in the state’s biennial budget, I was happy to vote for it. Along with my Paid Family and Medical Leave Program, we took bold action to support working families. It’s critical that we support child care workforce. Without child care, parents cannot go to work full time – or sometimes cannot go to work at all.

Along with other rising costs, Maine’s infant and toddler child care shortage costs families, businesses, and taxpayers an estimated \$403 million each year – double what it cost just four years ago. From 2016 to 2020, Maine lost almost a third of its child care workers, and the state hasn’t recovered from those losses.¹ In 2023, Maine child care programs served an estimated 9,422 fewer children than they were licensed to serve, largely due to a lack of staff. In fact, Maine needs approximately 1,090 child care providers to fill this gap.

Although the Legislative took steps to begin to fix child care, it’s clear that we have more work to do. Too many parents can’t find child care providers with open slots and too many child care providers are barely scraping by. I’m at the age when many of my friends are starting families of their own, and I hear from them – time and again – that they have to enter child care lotteries or put their names on long waitlists months and years before they even have their babies. It’s a major source of stress and worry for soon-to-be parents, many of whom are also taking care of their own aging, sometimes ailing, parents.

To create true equity in our workforce, childcare is a necessity. I also want to point out the lack of child care for members of the Legislature and state employees. As we deal with historic

¹ <https://www.mainepublic.org/business-and-economy/2023-06-05/lack-of-available-child-care-could-be-a-major-challenge-for-maines-future-report-finds>

vacancies within state government and aim to have diverse representation in our chambers, increasing access to child care—statewide—may help.

LD 2199 would fix a problem that costs child care businesses nearly \$5 million per year. Currently, child care providers who participate in the Maine's Child Care Affordability Program are paid subsidy rates based on a child's attendance and not enrollment. As a result, if a child is out sick (or for any reason), the child care provider is not paid for certain days. Yet, the child care provider still has to pay their staff, the rent or mortgage, and the utilities for their facility. It's hardly fair that they do not get reimbursed.

As a solution, LD 2199 would establish an emergency fund for child care providers in need of temporary assistance to keep their program in operation. It's the right thing to do. Maine literally cannot afford for any more child care provider doors to close.

For these reasons, I urge the Committee to vote "Ought to Pass" on LD 2199.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Mattie Daughtry". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned below the "Thank you," text.

Mattie Daughtry

Assistant Senate Majority Leader, Senate District 23

Brunswick, Freeport, Harpswell, Pownal, Chebeague Island, and part of Yarmouth