

Allyson Conley

**Testimony to the Joint Standing Committees on Appropriations and
Financial Affairs and Health and Human Services
LD 210**

Senators, Representatives, distinguished members of the Appropriations and Financial Affairs Committee and Health and Human Services Committee, my name is Ally Conley, I live in Standish and am the Director of Spring Point Children's Center in South Portland. I am here today as both a mother and an early childhood educator to testify in opposition of the governor's proposed budget cuts to vital childcare programs.

I am opposed to the proposed \$30 million in biennial cuts to the Child Care Wage Supplement Program. I'll start with my concerns as a mother. I have a three-year-old in childcare. Her teachers have been helping me raise her since she was eight weeks old. I can't imagine what motherhood would be like for me without their support for my daughter and my family. They deserve far more pay than they receive, even with the current supplements in place. I fear that the cuts to the childcare wage supplements may push these incredible educators out of the field—a field we desperately need them in. And who could blame them? Each time they receive even a small token of appreciation for their incredibly challenging work, it is taken away again.

I am also pregnant with my second child. My current wage supplement covers a little less than two weeks per month of my daughter's care. That is not insignificant to me. Once my second child is born, it will cover less than one week for both of them. If it is cut in half, as proposed, it will cover only two days per month of childcare. Ninety percent of my income—as someone who has dedicated 13 years to early childhood education and holds a relatively high-paying position in the field—will go directly to childcare expenses. My partner understood when we married that this work is my life and graciously accepted that his income would be our primary financial support. However, expecting his earnings to cover all our utilities, our mortgage, and other bills is unrealistic. The supports being cut may seem small, but they have a profound impact on keeping childcare workers in the field. At what point does it make more sense for me to stay home with my children rather than continue working to support other Maine families? These cuts are forcing passionate workers to make heartbreaking choices that impact the entirety of our state's workforce.

I am opposed to the proposed \$5 million in biennial cuts and elimination of the Child Care Employment Award. As a childcare worker, I qualified for this childcare assistance. But when it was announced, I didn't apply. Not because the financial relief would not have been

life-changing for my family—it absolutely would have been. I knew the funds were limited, and I couldn't help but worry that others needed it more than I did. I hoped more funding would come later and I'd apply then. That's who you are hurting if you approve these cuts—people who choose to put the needs of others above their own day after day, week after week. The teachers this proposed budget will hurt give everything to the children and families in their care, and I fear that after these cuts, there may be nothing left for them to give. And where does that leave Maine? Who will be there for working Mainers and their children?

I urge you to reject these cuts and to support the educators and families who depend on these critical programs. Thank you for your time.