

February 24, 2025

Testimony On:

**LD 210 - An Act Making Unified Appropriations and Allocations from the General Fund and Other Funds for the Expenditures of State Government and Changing Certain Provisions of the Law Necessary to the Proper Operations of State Government for the Fiscal Years Ending June 30, 2025, June 30, 2026, and June 30, 2027.**

My name is Bill Hager, I am a resident of Wells Maine, and I work for Catholic Charities Maine as the Agency's Childcare Program Director, and **I am here to urge this legislature to NOT Implement the proposed cuts to the childcare budget.**

I can keep this really simple: I am asking for you to reconsider this recommendation to cut these funds simply because this allocation is actually doing exactly what they were intended to do, which is to improve the economy by helping Maine families find and maintain employment through increasing the availability of childcare made possible by increasing the number of childcare staff.

Catholic Charities Maine operates two childcare centers in Southern Maine: the St. Elizabeth program, based in Portland and the St. Louis program, based in Biddeford/Saco. Directly because of this funding, and despite the year long delay in implementing key components of this fund, our two programs alone have been able to open 3 brand new classrooms which in turn as allowed us to enroll an additional 40 children. This increase in service is a direct result of the additional staff we have been able to recruit because of this funding. We had the rooms; we were only restricted by our ability to hire and retain staff.

I might add one additional observation: One of the most common complaint legislators such as yourselves hear pretty consistently, is that you are doing too little for regular working folks who do not participate in public programs like TANF, Mainecare, or Food Stamps. This funding supports for childcare for all Maine Families. In fact, state childcare funding in general is constructed in a manner to address needs of those families who either are not eligible for or choose to not apply for these other forms of publicly funded support.

In conclusion, the last legislature passed this funding package to address an acknowledged crisis in childcare, a crisis that impacted families, schools, and businesses. To reverse that decision now would only kick this particular can down the road for future legislatures, unnecessarily disrupting families lives and increasing the hiring challenges, both of which will cost the State of Maine considerably more than what we will save by dismantling these programs.

Please let me know if you have any questions or concerns about this testimony.

Sincerely:

*Bill Hager*

Bill Hager

Program Director

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