

Good afternoon Senator Rotundo, Representative Gattine, Senator Ingwerson, Representative Meyer, and distinguished members of the Appropriations and Financial Affairs Committee, and the Health and Human Services Committee. My name is Kevin Ready, and I am a Lewiston resident and a proud member of American Postal Workers Union Local 458 in Scarborough.

When my wife and I had our second child about two years ago, we made the difficult decision to have her stay home and take care of the kids full time for the first couple of years, in part because of the high cost of childcare, which would have eaten up most of what she made. I make a decent wage at the Postal Service (for now), but it is not easy to sustain a family of four on it. When we heard about the childcare subsidy last year, and found that we were within the income limits, we quickly applied and began touring childcare facilities, and my wife started looking for work again. Unfortunately, we missed the requirement that both parents must already be employed to qualify for the subsidy. My wife can't work without finding daycare for our son, and we can't afford daycare as it stands. We'll also be on a waitlist for both the subsidy and the childcare itself, once we do manage to apply.

I don't like to ask for help, but for my kids' sake and for my fellow postal workers and all working families across the state I urge you to strengthen the childcare subsidies in Maine by rejecting cuts to childcare worker wages, the Childcare Employment Award, and HeadStart, and indeed to increase the funding to the Childcare Affordability Program: there is a real need and demand for this program, and it will bring more people back into the workforce while helping working Maine families like mine.