



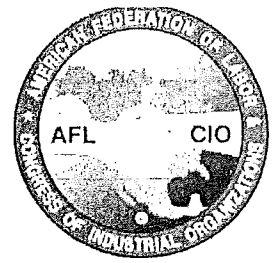
MAINE AFL-CIO

A Union of Unions Standing for Maine Workers

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Good afternoon Senator Rotundo, Representative Gattine, Senator Ingwersen, Representative Meyer, and members of the Appropriations and Financial Affairs and Health and Human Services Committees, my name is Sarah Bigney McCabe, I live in Skowhegan, and I am here on behalf of the Maine AFL-CIO to testify in opposition to the proposed cuts to child care in the Biennial Budget.

I am here before you today wearing two hats, one as a representative of the over 40,000 members of the 200 affiliated local unions of the Maine AFL-CIO, and the other as a mom of a three-year-old named Sam.

As you have heard here today, the lack of affordable and accessible childcare is a huge problem for Maine working families.

I have collected comments from our members, who are nurses, fire fighters, teachers, people who work at the shipyard and in dozens of other sectors who are struggling to find and to pay for child care. Workers are living paycheck to paycheck simply to pay for child care so they can afford to go to work. Parents are leaving the workforce altogether. Families are deciding not to have more children because they know they cannot find or afford child care.

I know this first hand. When I was pregnant I got on numerous waiting lists for child care, and it wasn't until my son was 15 months old that we finally got a spot. In that year we didn't have care, I cut back my hours at work to part time, and we depended on my mother to travel from Eddington to watch Sam on the days I worked. (By the way, if you are listening, thank you mom!) The worst was not knowing when we would get a spot- there was no way of knowing how long we would have to wait.

Sam goes to a wonderful home-based child care right around the corner from our house (shout out to the amazing Delores Alberico!) and he is absolutely thriving there. It's worth it, but costs more than our mortgage, it is a huge expense for working families. And, now that my stepdaughter is in college, we are paying a hefty price for education on both ends of the spectrum.

Those of you who were in the Legislature in the 131st heard the cries of working families from Kittery to Caribou, and made significant investments in our state's essential child care infrastructure. The wage supplements and employment award are helping to keep child care workers in the industry, which is keeping the rest of the state working. With staffing shortages across our economy, this has wide ripple effects.

De-funding the child care wage supplements and employment award would be incredibly short-sighted and will undermine the progress you started to make in this still fragile child care infrastructure. We need to recruit and

retain child care workers, and this is going in the opposite direction. This will mean fewer spots, and will force costs to continue to rise.

Our union members are nurses, firefighters, teachers, and other working people who the rest of us depend on every day. If they do not have child care, they can't go do their jobs. We all lose.

One question we also would like to pose to your committees and to the Department of Health and Human Services is why is there a waitlist on the Child Care Affordability Program (CCAP)? We had been told the program was underutilized, and then all of a sudden in November there was a waitlist. We would love to better understand how that \$10.2 million meant to expand the subsidy was spent so quickly. What will happen to unspent money from that line, if there is any? This waitlist shows there is a huge need to increase funding to the CCAP. It's unclear why so few new families were able to join before qualified families were unable to receive the help and put on the waitlist.

I will close by including a few quotes from our union members from a survey we circulated.

On behalf of so many families like mine, and of so many of our members who are truly struggling to find and afford child care, I respectfully urge you to stand up for working families and continue funding the **Child Care Educator Salary Supplement Program, Maine's Child Care Employment Award, and Head Start.**

Thank you.

Quotes from our members on child care:

It was challenging to find childcare and I had to delay my return to work until we could piece something together between family members and friends. It wasn't until almost a year later that we got into a daycare, which we really love. We are hoping we will be able to send our next child there but haven't gotten confirmation that there is room for them come fall. The cost of childcare with one child is almost as much as I make, working full time as a teacher. The thought of adding the cost of a second child is still something we are processing. I do not want to stop working but the cost is almost prohibitive. I want our daughter's teachers to get paid well but I also want it to be affordable for us.

Childcare in my area is \$200 per week. That is more than my mortgage payment.

Wife is looking to leave her current full time job to move to a part time job so we can accommodate the schedule of part time day care to lower daycare costs

I have a decent paying job and we can still barely afford it weekly. Having to pick between paying bills, getting groceries or having childcare so we can keep our jobs is obscene these days.

My wife and I have a very hard time paying for childcare and we both work full time and as much over time we can.

My wage as a firefighter doesn't come close to being able to afford childcare.

Every year I spend what little amount of money I have in my savings account as well as going into credit card debt in order to afford childcare so that I can continue working.

I am lucky to have reliable childcare for my 2 year old, but I worry about how I will be able to afford childcare for two. My husband and I are both teachers.

Wife is looking to leave her current full time job to move to a part time job so we can accommodate the schedule of part time day care to lower daycare costs.

My spouse took an early retirement to care for our children because we could not afford childcare.

I am lucky to have reliable childcare for my 2 year old, but I worry about how I will be able to afford childcare for two. My husband and I are both teachers.

There seem to be long waitlists in most places, the cost is very high, and my schedule of 12-16 hours does not seem to be compatible with most options available.