



Senator Rotundo, Representative Gattine, Senator Ingwersen, Representative Meyer, and distinguished members of the Appropriations and Financial Affairs Committee and Health and Human Services Committee, my name is Carrie Jadud. I serve as a community organizer for Maine People's Alliance.

I am here to testify neither for nor against LD 210. My testimony addresses the portions of the biennial budget pertaining to early childhood education.

At MPA we work to create a world where everyone has what they need, everyone contributes what they can, and no one is left behind. As an organizer, having one-on-one conversations with Mainers from many walks of life, I'm often struck by how those words seem to resonate with people—no matter their race, class, culture, gender, or indeed party affiliation. We all want to contribute, and none of us want to be left behind.

But this budget proposal would do just that. It leaves behind early childhood educators who want to contribute to the growth and well-being of future generations of Mainers. It leaves behind families who want to contribute to the economic life of their communities and provide for themselves. It leaves behind the promises we have made to young families who came or stayed here, that Maine would offer safety and opportunity.

The proposed cuts to wage supplements, employment awards, and Head Start represent so much more than technocratic spreadsheet tinkering. They are short-sighted attempts to clear an immediate hurdle while conceding the race. Investments in childcare are investments in Maine's economic present AND future. Early childhood careers are some of the few jobs that truly cannot be outsourced, and if we make the effort to ensure they are well-paid jobs, communities across the state will have stronger economic foundations. Workers will have better support to stay and grow in careers they enjoy, and children will have early access to supports that give them the best chance of thriving.

I suspect I am not the only woman in this room with a story of how income sacrificed for even a few years of our children's lives has reverberating effects—delayed career progression, less financial security for later life, greater economic vulnerability for the entire family. All these effects limit our resilience, our mobility, and our choices. Our society's legacy of relying on the unpaid or underpaid labor of women to save money in the short-term is not an achievement we should seek to replicate in this budget.

Every budget is an opportunity to reflect on the values that, even in these fraught times, we still claim to share. To that end:

If we value Mainers' work, we will ensure they have the infrastructure to do it—and that includes safe and supportive spaces for our children.

If we value vibrant communities, we will ensure Mainers have the opportunity to contribute.

If we believe all children matter, we should invest in their present and future.

Thank you.