

Senator Rotundo,, Representative Gattine, Senator Ingwersen, Representative Meyer, and honorable committee members: my name is Patty Kidder and I live in Springvale, located in the City of Sanford. I am here today to testify in support of Maine's early childhood education system.

The actual cost of providing quality child care is more than most families can afford and more than most providers can charge. Licensed child care centers and preschools that survived the Pandemic are struggling to remain open. In order to find and retain qualified early childhood educators due to low pay they need you to fully fund the Child Care Wage Supplement Program.

Many child care educators need and are counting on receiving the wage supplement to pay their own living expenses. It isn't right to pull that financial security away from them after it has been promised. I'm very concerned that many early childhood educators will leave their positions if the wage program isn't there to help them make ends meet.

My daughter and her husband in order to find quality child care they could afford, could only get part-time and they have had to stagger their work schedules. Her mother-in-law and I provide child care when the daycare is closed and now they only have 1 full day a week that the three of them can spend together. I'm sure they are not the only family going through this.

Maine's lowest income families need to be able to access Head Start for their children. It is a vital part of Maine's Early Education System and the best way to help the next generation break the cycle of poverty. A good education is key to future success and Head Start provides a good foundation for going forward in school.

I'm here to ask you to fully fund these programs nessessary to help Maine families access Maine's Early Education System. The children living in low income families are counting on you to help them get the care and early education they need.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

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