



maineaeYC

Maine Association for the
Education of Young Children

**Testimony of Heather Marden, Co-Executive Director of the Maine Association for the
Education of Young Children**

3/14/2025

**Neither for Nor Against LD 388: An Act to Provide Access to Quality Family Child Care for
Military Personnel by Exempting Certain Military Child Care Providers from State Licensing
Requirements**

Thank you Senator Ingwersen, Representative Meyer and members of the Health and Human Services Committee.

I am offering this testimony in response to LD 388, which seeks to provide access to quality family child care for military personnel by exempting certain military child care providers from state licensing requirements. While I do not take a position either in support or opposition to this bill, I wish to share pertinent information regarding the standards and regulations currently in place for military-operated child care programs.

Military-operated child care programs are subject to stringent regulations to ensure the highest levels of safety, quality, and care for children. These programs, whether center-based or family child care, are certified by the Department of Defense (DoD) and are accredited by nationally recognized organizations. They adhere to rigorous criteria to ensure that they meet the developmental, safety, and educational needs of the children they serve.

For center-based programs, which include child care and school-age centers, the DoD certification process ensures that the program meets comprehensive standards in areas such as:

1. **Facilities, health, safety, and risk management:** These include critical procedures around fire prevention, food service sanitation, medication storage, staff background checks, and adherence to staff-to-child ratios.
2. **Program logistics:** This covers the management of the program's operations, including health and safety inspections and child abuse prevention protocols.
3. **Programming:** The programs focus on positive youth development, school readiness, parent involvement, and integrating efforts from families, schools, and the community.

Military-operated programs undergo at least four unannounced inspections each year to ensure compliance with these standards, including comprehensive inspections for health, safety, and fire prevention, as well as evaluations by military service headquarters and parent representatives.

In addition, family child care providers (FCC) are held to similarly rigorous standards. Military-certified FCC providers care for small groups of children in their own homes, and they must meet DoD certification requirements, which often exceed state standards. These providers are subject to comprehensive background checks, health screenings, home inspections, and ongoing mentorship. FCC programs are designed to ensure that children receive developmentally appropriate activities in a safe and nurturing environment, and that providers maintain the necessary credentials and professional development.

It is important to note that while military child care providers must meet these comprehensive standards, the DoD's certification process is often aligned with or exceeds the standards required by individual states.

I want to make sure we are clarifying that there is DOD certified child care and Coast Guard Operated Child Care (although none in Maine) and then there is a program called Military Care in your Neighborhood. Military Child Care in Your Neighborhood (MCCYN) is a DoD and U.S. Coast Guard fee assistance program for eligible families who cannot access military-operated child care due to distance or waitlists. With MCCYN, a portion of the child care costs is paid to offset the costs of community-based care. This makes it easier for families to afford quality child care from local community providers.

Community providers participating in the fee assistance program through MCCYN are required to have state licensing and be accredited by a DOD or State approved national accrediting body to be approved as a MCCYN Plus location. To be participating, includes state-licensed providers that are enrolled in their state's QRIS, but do not yet qualify for MCCYN-PLUS, and licensed-only providers.

While this bill proposes an exemption from state licensing requirements if a program is certified by DOD or a Coast Guard operated child care does come to Maine, it is essential to acknowledge that military-operated and family child care programs already undergo significant oversight through DoD certification and national accreditation processes. These safeguards are in place to ensure that the child care programs offered to military families provide high-quality care and adhere to best practices in child development.

Currently, Maine has a DOD operated child care facility in Kittery. This program is not required to be licensed by the state. However, they also do not participate in Maine programs such as the Wage Supplement Program and Child Care Affordability Program. These require state licensure.

Thank you for your consideration of these important details and I highly encourage to read more about the amazing commitment that the DOD has for quality child care programming. They really set a standard in how we should view child care for all children in our state.

<https://militarychildcare.com/>