

**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"**

**Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services
March 14, 2025**

Senator Ingwersen, Representative Meyer and Distinguished Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services:

I am Trey Stewart; and I represent Senate District 2, which includes several municipalities in Penobscot and Aroostook Counties. I am here today to present 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."

On behalf of the United States Department of Defense (DoD) and military families stationed in Maine, I am honored to sponsor LD 388 and testify in support of a policy that has the potential to provide enhanced access to child care for our military population.

This legislation is critical to supporting military families and ensuring they have access to the high-quality, reliable child care they deserve. It achieves this by recognizing the rigorous standards already met by certified Family Child Care (FCC) providers within the Department of Defense system.

The Department of Defense established the Family Child Care program to meet the unique needs of our military families. These dedicated individuals provide a vital service by offering safe and flexible childcare options, which is vital for a population that does not work your typical 9-5 job.

As you may know, military families face unique challenges. Frequent relocations to new duty stations are a fact of life; and these moves can disrupt careers and create financial strain, especially for military spouses who need to obtain new professional licenses upon arrival. Similar to the professional occupational licensure compacts Maine has supported in the last few years, LD 388 could be a lifeline for our service members and their families.

Current law requires Family Child Care providers to undergo duplicative licensing and registration processes, even if an FCC provider has already met the rigorous requirements set by

the Department of Defense. This creates an unnecessary burden on the providers, the military families seeking care, and even the Maine DHHS, which is stretched too thin as it is.

It is important to understand that the Department of Defense certification process for Family Child Care providers is incredibly thorough. It includes:

Comprehensive background checks - ensuring the safety and well-being of the children in their care is paramount; rigorous monthly inspections; unannounced visits ensuring compliance and maintaining accountability within the program; and continuous professional development through annual training and competency-based programs, ensuring they are equipped with the most up-to-date knowledge and skills.

LD 388 recognizes the rigor of this existing system. By exempting these highly qualified providers from duplicative state requirements, we can ease the burden on military families, allowing them to access trusted child care options immediately upon relocation, and support military spouses, enabling them to continue their careers and contribute to their family's financial well-being.

We would also be strengthening our military readiness. By reducing stress and providing peace of mind, we contribute to the overall readiness of our service members.

Maine has a long and proud history of supporting our military. By passing LD 388, we can further demonstrate our commitment to these families and ensure they have the resources they need to thrive in our state.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I urge you to support LD 388.