



March 14, 2025

Senator Ingwersen, Representative Meyer, and Honorable Members of the Health and Human Services Committee,

I join you today on behalf of the Maine Women's Lobby. For over forty years, the Maine Women's Lobby has worked to build gender justice in Maine through legislative advocacy and systems change.

We are here today **in support of LD 561 An Act to Ensure Subsidy Reimbursements for Certain Child Care Providers** and thank Senator Baldacci for sponsoring this important bill.

You're hearing today stories about how childcare is more expensive and less accessible than ever, and the impact that has on families. We're here today to draw some connections between these high costs, and the impact they have on the lifetime earnings of women in Maine.

Women are the backbone of all unpaid caregiving in Maine, and they make up over 60 percent of Maine's unpaid caregivers.¹ Maine women are far more likely than men to cite childcare or other family or personal obligations as the reason for working part-time - in fact, too few men cited childcare concerns as their reason for working part time to show a statistical sample.²

You've heard the phrase, 'the workforce behind the workforce.' I want us to remember that when the childcare systems fall through, it is almost entirely women who pick up the pieces by stepping out of the workforce, forgoing years of contributions to social security or retirement savings. **The effects are even more powerful when we consider race and racism, and the effects on Black, brown, and Indigenous women.**³

Unfortunately, as you've heard, so often the caregiving infrastructure falls through because we have continued to treat childcare systems like any other marketplace, as though it's a business that offers a good, and people are free to choose to purchase it or not, or to shop around for a competitive price. We simply know that is not the case, and **much of the pressure we are seeing in our economy right now comes from this broken market, through no fault of the capable business people and providers, or the families that rely on this service.** In fact,

¹ Maine CDC. (2019). Maine Caregiving Infographic. Retrieved from: <https://www.cdc.gov/aging/data/infographic/2019/maine-caregiving.html>

² Cutler Institute (2022). Economic Security of Older Women in Maine. Available at MaineWomen.org/publications

³ Boston indicators (2022). Care Work in Massachusetts: A Call for Racial and Economic Justice for a Neglected Sector. Retrieved from https://www.bostonindicators.org/reports/report-detail-pages/care_work

childcare is a public good that benefits most families, all communities, and the entire economy, and we must treat it as such.

We all agree we must **ensure that our economy is predicated on all families being able to access affordable, high quality childcare.** This bill offers a simple fix to correct the market, by establishing a subsidies process that will support the small businesses and organizations that provide such essential childcare and early education services in our communities. This in turn is a stabilizing force, allowing this industry to make longer-term plans for their health and by extension the health of our workforce.

We hope you will vote Ought to Pass on LD 561 .

Sincerely,

Destie Hohman Sprague
Maine Women's Lobby