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Testimony of Nate Cloutier

Before the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services  
April 8, 2025

**In Support of LD 1389, *“An Act to Create the Building Opportunity Through Out-of-school Program”***

Senator Ingwersen, Representative Meyer, and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services, my name is Nate Cloutier, and I am here today on behalf of HospitalityMaine, representing Maine’s restaurant and lodging industries. I am also testifying on behalf of the Maine Tourism Association (MTA). MTA has been promoting Maine and supporting members in every type of tourism business, such as lodging, restaurants, camps, campgrounds, retail, guides, tour operators, amusements, and historical and cultural attractions for over 100 years. HospitalityMaine and the Maine Tourism Association support LD 1389, *“An Act to Create the Building Opportunity Through Out-of-school Program.”*

Access to affordable child care has been a legislative priority for our industries as we continue working to overcome persistent workforce shortages. We have consistently supported an “all-of-the-above” approach to child care solutions, recognizing that no single policy will resolve the complex challenges facing the sector. LD 1389 represents an important piece of that broader puzzle—helping to ensure that children have a safe, enriching place to go beyond the typical school day, so their parents are not forced to step away from the workforce.

Hospitality and tourism are foundational to Maine’s economy, employing over 130,000 Mainers year-round and seasonally. Yet our industries continue to grapple with a persistent workforce shortage, worsened by the lack of accessible, affordable, and full-day child care options. Too often, working parents are forced to reduce their hours or leave the workforce altogether because care during out-of-school hours is simply not available or reliable.

LD 1389 directly addresses this gap. By funding community-based nonprofit organizations and

expanding access to high-quality, out-of-school programming across the state, this bill provides working families with the assurance they need: that their children are safe, supported, and learning even when school is not in session. This is especially critical in the afternoons and summer months—peak times for our industry when the need for staff is greatest.

Importantly, the bill also prioritizes programming that removes barriers for at-risk youth, includes transportation solutions, and ensures equitable access across geographic regions. These features reflect an understanding of Maine's diverse rural and urban needs and will allow the program to benefit hospitality and tourism businesses in every corner of the state.

The return on investment for LD 1389 is clear. When working parents have access to dependable out-of-school care, they are more likely to remain in the workforce, reducing turnover and hiring costs for employers like us. Simultaneously, our next generation gains enriching environments that improve academic and social outcomes.

We urge the committee to support this legislation and help Maine build a child care infrastructure that supports working families, strengthens our economy, and ensures our hospitality and tourism industry can continue to thrive.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I would be happy to answer any questions.