

Testimony of Jenn Wiles, Early Childhood Quality Improvement Systems Coordinator,
Maine Roads to Quality Professional Development Network

**Comment on LD 1859, An Act to Improve Access to Child Care and Early Childhood
Education by Establishing Regional Service Hubs**

Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services

May 15, 2025

Senator Ingwersen, Representative Meyer, and Honorable Members of the Health and Human Services Committee, thank you for your time today. My name is Jenn Wiles, and I am the Early Childhood Quality Improvement Systems Coordinator at Maine Roads to Quality Professional Development Network. MRTQ PDN works to promote and support professionalism in the field of early childhood education and out-of-school time and to improve quality through the provision of a statewide system of professional development. We are a partnership of the Catherine Cutler Institute at the University of Southern Maine, the University of Maine Center for Community Inclusion and Disability Studies, and the Maine Afterschool Network that is funded primarily by the Maine Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Child and Family Services, Child Care Development Block Grant.

LD 1859 proposes to improve access to child care and early education through the provision of regional hubs that offer support services to families, employers, communities, and educators. To inform your consideration of this bill, I want to share with you that MRTQ PDN currently delivers services aimed at increasing both access to and quality of early childhood settings in all regions of Maine. Most relevant to the activities outlined in LD 1859 is that MRTQ PDN provides:

- The database and website for Child Care Choices, Maine's online search tool for families searching for early childhood and out-of-school time care.
- Support to new and expanding child care businesses through training ("Getting Started in Family Child Care" and Child Care Leadership Institute trainings) and technical assistance support.
- Guidance for educators navigating state systems, such as the Child Care Affordability Program, Child Care Licensing, the Child Care Educator Wage Supplement Program, and *Rising Stars for ME*.
- Training and technical assistance for educators on cultural competence and creating equitable early childhood settings. MRTQ PDN has eight regionally based Quality Specialists available to offer phone, email, and on-site technical assistance.
- Collaboration and support for regional child care-related conferences and professional development opportunities, including recent events in York and Aroostook Counties.



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- Quarterly meetings with higher education representatives focused on the needs of early childhood students in higher education, as well as creating alternative pathways to professional achievement beyond a two- or four-year degree.
- Grants and scholarships for individuals and programs, including Quality Improvement Awards specifically focused on increasing programs' Star rating with *Rising Stars for ME*.
- The MRTQ Registry, which contains comprehensive, longitudinal data around the early childhood and out-of-school workforce in Maine.

As the Legislature continues promoting policy and investments to strengthen early childhood education in Maine, please see MRTQ PDN as a resource to policymakers and programs. We appreciate the opportunity to share our testimony with you today and look forward to continuing to share our expertise in delivering professional development and quality improvement supports to early childhood educators and children and families throughout Maine.