

Testimony of Rita Furlow
Before the Joint Standing Committee on Health & Human Services
LD 1859
An Act to Improve Access to Child Care and Early Childhood Education by Establishing
Regional Resource Hubs
May 15, 2025

Good morning, Senator Ingwersen, Representative Meyer, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services, I am Rita Furlow. I represent Senate District 32, the city of Biddeford and the towns of Arundel, Dayton, Hollis, and Lyman. I am here today to present testimony in support of LD 1859, *An Act to Improve Access to Child Care and Early Childhood Education by Establishing Regional Resource Hub*. The Maine Children's Alliance is a statewide non-partisan, non-profit research and advocacy organization whose mission is to promote sound public policies to improve the lives of children, youth, and families in Maine.

Because the brain's architecture is built over time, and from the bottom up, ensuring a strong foundation early in life is critical to everything that follows. Strong foundations are built by making sure young children have positive learning experiences and stable, consistent relationships with caring adults at home and in the community. Today, with 69% of Maine children under age six having all resident parents in the workforce, it is crucial to make sure Maine's investments in early childhood reflect the science of what children need, while also accommodating Maine families as they raise the generation that will lead Maine into the future.¹

We are supportive of this legislation because it would support the needs of parents searching for child care, support new and existing child care providers, and work with the business community to meet the child care needs of their employers.

Many of you are likely to vividly recall the first time you dropped off your first-born at a child care center. Many parents need help navigating which child care center or family child care home is best for their child. Sometimes the first placement doesn't work for a family. Parents across the country receive much more support than parents in Maine when they are facing the search for child care. Most states in the country, 47 according to the national

¹ The Annie E. Casey Foundation, KIDS COUNT Data Center, Children under age 6 with all available parents in work force (5-yr averages) in Maine, retrieved from: <https://datacenter.aecf.org/data/tables/7317-children-under-age-6-with-all-available-parents-in-work-force-detailed?loc=21&loc=2#detailed/2/any/false/2545,1095,2048,574,1729,37,871,870,573,869/any/14380,14381>

organization, Child Care Aware, support families with organizations called “resource and referral centers.”

As you have all heard many times, child care is very expensive for young families. As our recent KIDS COUNT Data Book notes, the average cost of child care for an infant at a child care center in Maine is over \$12,000 – similar to a first year of tuition at the University of Maine. There are programs that can ease the financial burden of child care. Unfortunately, too few families seem to have information about the availability of programs such as the Child Care Affordability Program, Head Start, or tax credits that could support them in paying for child care. Regional support staff can assist families in not just finding care but in navigating eligibility and program applications.

We also support this legislation because it can help local communities, and the state, determine their child care needs. If we are going to meet the child care needs of working families, we need better information – at both the community and state level.

We know there are significant waiting lists – yet we don’t have good information on where those wait list are in the state. We regularly hear from families about the lack of availability of child care for infants and toddlers. Yet we don’t have good information to help support the growth of this care in particular communities.

This legislation would support the collection of data that could be used at the local and state level to better support critical investments to support the needs of families.

Collecting this type of information is not the responsibility of the Department of Health and Human Services. While they license child care providers and administer the Child Care Affordability Program, they are not tasked with understanding and supporting the supply and demand of the child care market.

This bill would also support communities by working with employers seeking child care for their employees. Regional resource hubs can support the child care needs of Maine businesses by connecting them with local child care providers or working alongside them with other community partners to help grow new child care businesses.

We urge you to support this legislation to support the needs of families, local educations, and business community as they work at the local level to support the needs of children, families, and our local and state economy.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I'm happy to answer any questions you may have about this legislation.

7-1-1988

Inform - A Quarterly Newsletter for Maine Women (June-Aug 1988)

The Maine Commission for Women Staff
The Maine Commission for Women

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Inform

Published by The Maine Commission for Women

FROM THE CHAIR

In this issue of *Inform* the Commission is focusing on one of the most important issues affecting many working women today – quality, affordable child care. Child care is an issue that is now being addressed by many businesses out of economic necessity. Most women work out of economic necessity. Since women make up 53% of today's workforce, businesses are recognizing the economic necessity to accommodate child care needs.

Governor John R. McKernan, Jr. has been a leader in recognizing the need for quality, affordable child care. This past legislative session he included \$3.5 million in his budget to improve child care in Maine. An overview of the Governor's package on child care is included. The role of the Office of Child Care is highlighted as well as successful child care programs from small, home-based care to public/private partnerships. I hope you will find this information useful in finding or providing child care. If you have ideas or suggestions to improve child care in Maine please call the Commission office.

Our next issue will focus on our very successful Annual Meeting held on June 17, 1988 with keynote speaker Olympia Snowe, our annual Progress Awards and the presentation of the members of our new Regional Commissions in northern, eastern and southern Maine.

CHILD CARE IN MAINE

... How Far We've Come

And Where We Go From Here ...

Child Care has emerged as one of the hottest public policy issues of the 80's: it is prominently placed at the top of the legislative agenda, in both Augusta and Washington, and it has captured debate in the political arena, with liberals and conservatives alike vying for leadership roles.

A recent Newsweek article (6/13/88), citing the phenomena of child care and family policy reform as the paramount issues this campaign year, asks "When the election hoopla ends, and the last balloon has burst, where will the children be?"

The hopeful answer is that they will still be at the top of the agenda, thanks to many years of hard work by women's and children's advocacy groups – and indications that the health of our economy depends on it.

Here in Maine, The Governor's 1987 Economic Development Task Force issued recommendations for an on-going public-private partnership to address the needs of the state's labor force, particularly those of Maine's working families. Their proposals were met with unprecedented enthusiasm at an Augusta conference held in October, when more than 600 providers, advocates, and businesspeople gathered to map out a child care strategy for the remainder of the century.

As represented by the conference attendees, "The population concerned with child care has changed dramatically," says Barbara Collier, Director of the Maine Office of Child Care

Coordination (OCCC). "It's no longer just women's groups and providers . . . but businesspeople as well."

It was only 15 years ago that President Nixon vetoed a comprehensive \$2 billion federal child care package as "anti-family." How – and why – have attitudes changed? The primary reason is sheer necessity, when one considers the facts:

"Today, fewer than 7% of American families represent the "Norman Rockwell" version of family life, with father as sole breadwinner and mother as sole caretaker;

"Nearly 50% of all American workers are women, and 80-90% of those are of child-bearing or child-caring age;

"Nationwide, over 66% of women with children under 18-years-old are in the labor market: 58% of mothers with kids under 6 are working, and 50% of those with children under the age of 1 are in the workforce;

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(Child Care in Maine continued)

*In Maine, industry loses an estimated \$3-8 million each year because of employee absenteeism related to inadequate child care;

*In nearly 25% of all Maine households with one or more youngsters, at least one parent is forced to quit work, is unable to take a job, or unable to continue training or education because of child care problems;

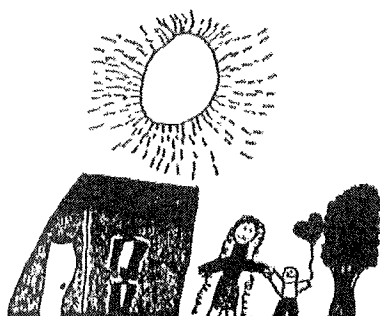
*By the year 2000 - only 12 years from now - 80% of American women with pre-school children will be working outside the home, according to the Center in Child Development and Social Policy at Yale University.

*Of the 44,000 companies in the U.S. currently employing more than 100 people, only 3,000 offer some kind of child care assistance. Among those who do, 65% cite reduced employee turnover; 53% acknowledge reduced absenteeism; 85% enjoy easier recruitment of new workers; and 90% have witnessed increased employee morale.

In short, accommodating the needs of working families has become a key variable in the economic development equation: Employers must now seek innovative ways to keep women in the workforce in order to compete successfully in this new "pro-family" economy and child care, as well as our children, are the winners.

The sudden popularity of child care does not mean we should be any less vigilant in our efforts to lobby legislators and educate other policy-makers. How, when, and where current funds are invested will decide whether delivery of services will meet the need for quality, affordable, and accessible child care. And, despite great progress, the demand for child care in Maine still far exceeds the supply.

This issue of *Inform* examines the child care issue: how far we've come, where we are, and where we go from here.



THE STATE'S ROLE: THE OFFICE OF CHILD CARE COORDINATION

Though child care has been a priority for women's groups for decades, it was not until January of 1986 that Maine's Office of Child Care Coordination (OCCC) was established. Long on the list of M.C.W. legislative priorities, the OCCC was a recommendation of the Child Care Task Force, established in 1983 by the Legislature to assess Maine's unmet child care needs and to propose changes in policies and programs that would increase the availability, affordability, and quality of child care.

Located within Department of Human Services' Bureau of Social Services, the OCCC is staffed by Director Barbara Collier, former staff to the Task Force; and Marcia Keidel Lovell, former day care coordinator for Coastal Child Care in Rockland.

Governed by the Child Care Advisory Committee, which is comprised of providers, parents, educators, members of the business community and others, the OCCC is charged with an impressive slate of duties: it serves as a clearinghouse of information, conducts public education services to help parents become better consumers of child care services, evaluates applicants for child care funding grants, conducts an on-going review of licensing rules, provides technical assistance to private and public sector employers, school systems, and community groups; and coordinates the development of a training system for providers.

In its recent 2-year report issued in December, 1987, the Child Care Advisory Committee targeted three priority areas of activity for the OCCC:

- (1) Funding for development and expansion of existing services;
- (2) Training of child care providers to enhance quality care and the status of the profession; and,
- (3) Public Education to increase society's understanding of child care as both an economic and human development imperative.

We visited with Barbara to discuss the status of child care services since the inception of the OCCC: its progress, achievements, and the challenges ahead.

CHILD CARE: THE IDEAL

In assessing child care needs in Maine, the Task Force made a startling determination: to address the needs of all Maine parents qualified to receive some degree of assistance for child care services - whether in the form of direct subsidies or tax credits - the state would be required to commit a whopping \$100 million appropriation!

THE REALITY TODAY

This year's comprehensive child care package presented to the Legislature in the Governor's Supplemental Budget more than doubles the state's commitment over last year's appropriation, dedicated to increasing state-subsidized slots, providing 5% salary increases for contracted child care workers, boosting before- and after-school services, and supplementing training funds for providers.

This year's \$3.5 million is, in fact, the largest and most expensive commitment to date, funding an array of services to enhance all aspects of child care, bringing the state significantly closer to addressing the 1986 recommendations of the Child Care Task Force.

ACHIEVEMENTS TO DATE

The OCCC's first statewide public information campaign was launched in the Fall of 1986. Entitled "Choosing Child Care," the education campaign utilized televised public service announcements and thousands of posters and booklets aimed at helping parents critically evaluate day care services. The campaign was a smashing success, placing OCCC on the map. "Choosing Child Care," says Collier "raised parent's consciousness about what they should expect for services, and they turned to us for the answers."

Increasing public awareness also increased expectations of the state's role in supporting better, more accessible child care. The Governor and the Legislature responded the following year by approving a \$1.6 million appropriation.

Collier cites the establishment of Maine's Resource Development system as among the most significant achievements to date.

Given the diversity of child care needs among Maine's rural, suburban, and urban regions, the six Resource Development Centers (RDCs), conduct on-going assessments to determine child care needs on a regional basis, and provide an array of services to employers, providers, and parents. The RDCs act as clearinghouses of existing child and adult care providers, programs, and services. They provide technical assistance to public and private employers who are interested in providing child care benefits for their employees or communities. They also make referrals and offer counseling services to parents; promote community awareness and consumer education; and survey, assess, and coordinate training services for providers.

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THE PROVIDER'S PRESPECTIVE

We spoke with a variety of child care providers representing all aspects of the child care industry, from registered family day care providers to licensed, subsidized centers. We asked them to discuss the issues and provide their suggestions as to how government, the business community, parents, and providers can work together to ensure quality and affordable child care. Their observations provide valuable insights to the challenges facing workers on the front lines:

PAM MCMANEMON of Presque Isle is a licensed family day care provider whose 12 years of experience in the industry makes her an expert on the problems and rewards in the field today. The keys to quality care in Maine, says Pam are training and enforcement of minimum quality standards. Having recently completed a 56 hour course, she says that training opportunities provide far more than technical information and assistance. Running a child care business "can be isolating", she says, and training courses "put you in touch with other people facing the same issues . . . you get to share information, and work together to solve common problems." As a result of the contacts she made through training, Pam says she now has "a resource connection . . . I'm part of a network, I know where to reach out" for new ideas and professional advice. Though Pam received financial aid to cover registration fees, expenses for meals, time, travel, and substitute care were "out of pocket". The investment was, however, worth it. "I learned so much about safety, health, and programming." Most importantly, however, it gave her an enormous "boost in self-confidence". "It helped me see that I already know a lot, that I was part of the network. It made me want to be a better provider". Pam is also a vigorous supporter of licensing of day care centers. Getting licensed, she says, made her feel "more at ease. I did it for my own peace of mind, knowing that my home was safe for my clients' children as well as my own family." The biggest obstacles facing child care, she says, is cost, for both parents and providers. Insurance for providers, she says, is expensive and dangerously scarce, and there is too little support for middle-income working families, who bear the greatest burden for child care expenses. Pam is President of The Maine Family Day Care Association, which plans to become active in promoting legislation next year.

THE \$3.5 MILLION PYRAMID: 1988 SUPPLEMENTAL BUDGET APPROPRIATION

The following itemizes this year's funding package as it will enhance QUALITY, AVAILABILITY, AND AFFORDABILITY of child care services in Maine:

AFFORDABILITY:

*\$651,000 for 179 additional state subsidized contracted slots. A specific number of these slots will be designated for special needs children, infants and toddlers, children of teen parents, and children of parents entering substance abuse treatment programs.

*\$1,041,505 for 394 voucher slots for state subsidized care. 191 of these will be reserved for children whose families earn between 0-80% of the Maine median income. 203 will be partially subsidized vouchers for families earning between 80-115% of the median income.

QUALITY:

*\$500,000 for 10% salary increases for child care workers in contracted facilities;

*\$75,000 for additional training for all child care providers.

ACCESSIBILITY:

*\$30,000 for additional staff in RDCs located in underserved "Job Opportunity Zones" in Washington, Hancock, Arundel, and Piscataquis Counties.

*\$248,000 for on- or near-site day care services for children of state employees in Bangor and Augusta;

*\$243,000 to provide an even state-match for 6 model employer-sponsored and supported day care centers (3 will be located between York and Cumberland counties, 3 in other areas of the state);

*\$75,000 for additional before and after-school child care slots;

*\$62,500 for child care services and programs for children of dislocated workers and employment trainees;

*\$230,000, to be matched with private foundation funds, for a one-time revolving loan fund, to be administered by Coastal Enterprises, Inc. of Wiscasset, for loans, grants, and technical assistance for development and expansion of child care facilities.

*\$41,000 for the establishment of a seventh Resource Development Center in York County.

PATRICIA EMERSON of Brunswick runs a registered home babysitting service, where she provides care to children ranging from infancy to school-age. She started her business 11 years ago because of her "love of children", and the benefits of having her own home-based small business. Running a day care service, she says, provides the best of both worlds for women who want the benefits of both family and work life. "I wanted to be at home with my own children; and I liked the idea of being my own boss, setting my own hours." Pat provides services to the children of teachers in the local school system, giving her holiday and summer vacation time. For Pat, providing care is more than a business, and her charges are more than clients. "We're a little family," she says, where there is a close-knit relationship among children, provider and parents.

BOBBIE FLYNN is Director of Child Care Services at Penquis Community Action program in Bangor, a licensed state-contracted agency. Bobbie cites public education - of employers, parents, and the higher education system itself - as the greatest challenge ahead. She considers increased support of the voucher system, and funding for more and better training opportunities as

the most progressive aspects of this year's package. The voucher system, she says, will give parents the flexibility to choose the kind of child care they feel is best. That choice, coupled with more aggressive education efforts, will help parents ask the right questions and make informed decisions. In this and other areas, Bobbie sees the RDCs playing a critically important role.

She also cites an enormous need for education among employers, who must be encouraged to examine the entire spectrum of child care services. "Employers tend to consider on-site day care" - which can be prohibitively expensive - "as the only option." Employer-supported day care options offer the best hope for middle-income parents earning too much to qualify for subsidies, but too little to bear the burden alone. Most encouraging, she says, is the state's commitment to more training opportunities and increased wages for care providers, an area that has been "strongly lacking" in the past. While the voc-ed schools are doing "a very good job" in the area of training, plans for future reform should be centered on the university system, which "needs to pay more attention to the training needs of child care providers"

CHILD CARE OPTIONS AVAILABLE IN MAINE

The following is reprinted with permission from "Choosing Child Care", available through the Bureau of Social Services, State House Station #11, Augusta, 04333. This booklet is a valuable resource to parents, providing suggestions on how to find day care, questions to ask providers, and other information to help you make the right choice for your family.

Child Care Centers - Facilities where 13 or more children ages 8 weeks to 16 may be cared for on a regular or non recurring basis. These facilities are required to be licensed by the Maine Department of Human Services (DHS) and must meet minimum requirements concerning health and safety. Centers are subject to yearly inspections by a State Fire Marshal as well as annual review by the DHS Licensing Unit.

Licensed Family Day Care Home - Facilities in which 3 to 12 unrelated children ages infancy to 16 years may receive care. They, too, must meet minimum health and safety requirements, and are inspected annually by a State Fire Marshal and a DHS Licensing Worker.

Registered Home Babysitting Services - Facilities in which 3 to 12 unrelated children ages infancy to 16 years are in care. Applicants must comply with requirements for fire inspections, water test and TB test. This is a self-certification process. The DHS Licensing Unit is permitted to make one on-site visit per year.

Legal Unlicensed Family Day Care - Homes in which only one or two unrelated children are cared for without a license.

EXPANDING HORIZONS: U.S.M.'S DIVISION OF HUMAN RESOURCES

Thanks to the creative leadership of the University of Southern Maine (USM) Division of Human Resources, Portland-area parents and businesses are enjoying the benefits of an innovative public-private partnership addressing the critical need for child care in Maine's largest city.

A recent recipient of the "Best on the Block" award issued by the U.S. Congressional Women's Caucus, USM's Div. of Human Resources was singled out as one of twenty programs in the nation recognized for "innovative employer child care efforts."

Long on the forefront of child care issues, USM has led the way in developing a full range of quality child care options, including day, after-school, evening, and sick care for children from infancy to adolescence. In addition to sponsoring a parenting center, which serves the on-going needs of families, the U.S.M. program currently provides care to more than 225 children in existing multi-site centers, including its new state-of-the-art facility located on the Portland campus. The program will soon be supplemented by an additional 100 slots at its new child care center located at the Gorham campus, due open this fall.

The University's leadership has extended well beyond the campus community, having created a broad-based advisory task force, entitled "Child and Family Horizons," which will work for future initiatives and advocate for expanded services throughout the entire region.

Perhaps its greatest achievement, however, is USM's role as catalyst of an innovative public-private partnership creating a new in-town child care center located in the city's West End neighborhood. A trend-setting innovation in the field of child care, the center is a cooperative venture among the University and local businesses - including Gendron Commercial Brokers, Morse, Payson, and Noyes; and Mercy Hospital - to provide care to approximately 100 pre-schoolers beginning this fall. The facility will be located in an existing building, formerly Pierce Furniture Store, adjacent to the Reiche School.

The project, initiated last June, brought together the interests of local businesses looking for ways to address employees' day care problems, the needs of the neighborhood school seeking support for playground expansion, and the existing administrative resources provided by USM's Child Care Services program.

Working together under USM's leadership, the businesses and the city found creative solutions to an otherwise insurmountable challenge. By utilizing an existing facility, the businesses dramatically reduced their initial capital costs; by finding an ideal location adjacent to the school, the city identified ways the project could financially benefit Reiche's plans to expand its playground facilities; and by utilizing the administrative systems already established by USM's child care services program - a nationally-recognized program - the partnership has produced an ideal system of affordable, accessible, and quality child care.

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CHILD CARE RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT CENTERS: BRINGING IT ALL TOGETHER

Aroostook County Action Program
P.O. Box 1116
Presque Isle, ME 04769 (764-3721)
Contact: Belinda Carter
Covering all of Aroostook County

Action Opportunities, Inc.
Head Start-Day Care
Box 562
Ellsworth, ME 04805 (667-2995)
Contact: Grant R. Lee
Covering Washington and Hancock Counties

Penquis Community Action
Program, Inc.
P.O. Box 262, Harlow Street
Bangor, ME 04401 (941-2830)
Contact: Roberta Flynn
Covering Penobscot, Piscataquis,
North Somerset Counties

Community Concepts, Inc.
P.O. Box 278, Market Square
South Paris, ME 04281 (743-7716)
Contact: Deborah Damon
Covering Oxford, Franklin, and
Androscoggin Counties

So. Kennebec Child Development Corp.
9 Higgins Street
Augusta, ME 04330 (626-3410)
Contact: Elizabeth J. Ayotte
Covering Lincoln, Knox, Waldo,
Kennebec, Sagadahoc, So. Somerset
Counties, plus Bath, Brunswick, and
Topsham

Child Care Connections
87 High Street
Portland, ME 04101 (871-7449)
Contact: Kathryn J. Stead
Covering York and Cumberland
Counties
(excluding Brunswick and Topsham)
*(A seventh RDC will be established in
York County as a result of this year's
Budget appropriation)

For More Information, Contact:
OFFICE OF CHILD CARE
COORDINATION
Bureau of Social Services
State House Station # 11
Augusta, ME 04333 (289-5060)

LEGISLATIVE SESSION A SUCCESS

The Maine Commission for Women is pleased to have had another very successful session in the second half of the 113th Legislature. The Family Medical Leave Act (MCW's #1 priority) was passed and signed into law. In addition, 95% of the other legislation the MCW and the Women's Legislative Agenda Coalition supported was signed into law. Many thanks to the Legislature - particularly the Appropriations, Health and Human Resources, and Labor committees and the Governor - for understanding the needs of Maine women and their families and for their willingness to act positively on behalf of Maine women.

What follows is a summary of the laws passed. All of these laws will become effective on August 4th, except where noted. If you would like more information on specifics or implementation, please don't hesitate to call our office at 289-3417.

Finally, it's not too early to think about the 114th. If you have ideas or concerns you think should be addressed legislatively, please let us know!

AA To Ensure Family and Medical Leave in the State of Maine (L.D. 2534, AM - P.L. 1988, Ch. 661)

Summary: Entitles eligible employees up to 8 weeks of unpaid leave for the birth or adoption of a child, or the serious illness of self, child, spouse, or parent. Applies to all Maine businesses with 25 or more employees, and extends eligibility to workers who have been employed by the same employer for 12 consecutive months.

AA to Provide for Child Care and Child Development Training for Student Parents (L.D. 2150, AM - P.L. 1988, Ch. 767)

Summary: Encourages local school districts to establish on-site child care services for student parents and child development training courses by allowing those costs to be recovered through the state education funding formula.

AA to Correct Inequities in the Maine State Retirement System (L.D. 2548 - P.L. 1988, Ch. 823)

Summary: Repeals discriminatory provision in the state retirement laws by allowing state employees and teachers to designate anyone as beneficiary eligible for full survivor benefits (such status previously was restricted to a child, spouse, or parent.)

RESOLUTION to Make the Language of the Constitution Gender Neutral (L.D. 2571)

Summary: Proposes to eliminate gender-biased language from the Constitution of Maine. To be presented for voter approval on November General Election ballot.

AA to Require Mandatory Medicare Assignment for Physician Services in Maine (L.D. 2324, AM - P.L. 1988, Ch. 719)

Summary: Imposes a financial penalty on physicians and other medical providers who fail to post their policy regarding Medicare assignment.

AA to Make Health Care More Accessible to Low-Income Elderly and Disabled Individuals, Pregnant Women, and Children (L.D. 2242, AM - P.L. 1988, Ch. 847)

Summary: Establishes a federally-approved option to extend Medicaid benefits to pregnant women and infants whose family incomes are below 185% of the poverty level, and to eligible senior citizens, disabled individuals, and children up to 5 years old whose family incomes are below 100% of the poverty level (Effective 10/1/88).

AA to Expand the Medicaid Dental Program to Include Adults (L.D. 2492, AM - P.L. 1988, Ch. 836)

Summary: Expands Medicaid dental benefits to eligible adults for emergency services, including oral surgical care for injury and infection, and other services necessary to relieve acute pain (Effective 1/1/89).

AA to Increase the Minimum Wage (L.D. 2582 - P.L. 1988, Ch. 738)

Summary: Authorizes a \$.10 increase (to \$3.75) effective January 1, 1989; and another \$.10 increase effective January 1, 1990, unless the average minimum wage of the other New England States is less than \$3.85.

AA to Increase the Work Incentive in the Unemployment Insurance Partial Benefit Structure (L.D. 2517, AM - P.L. 1988, Ch. 636)

Summary: Allows part-time wage earners receiving unemployment insurance to retain a greater percentage of their benefits as they continue to seek full-time employment. Previous state law passed in 1959 required a 1:1 reduction in benefits for each dollar earned, after a wage exemption of \$10. This law increases that exemption to \$25.

AA to clarify the State's Anti-discrimination Laws to Include Families with Children in Mobile Home Parks (Originally presented in L.D. 2152; Amended into mobile home omnibus bill, L.D. 2147, AM - P.L. 1988, Ch. 770)

Summary: Extends current anti-discrimination laws against families with children to include mobile home parks, though includes provision permitting maintenance of "adult-only" parks in certain circumstances.

*WLAC bills "amended into" supplemental budget (L.D. 2156, AM/S-489, effective upon Governor's signature, unless otherwise noted):

AA to Improve the Standard of Living for Maine's Low-Income Families (Originally presented in L.D. 2212)

Summary: Provides a 5% increase in the payment standard for AFDC families (budget also provides for 10% increase in the AFDC standard of need) (Effective 1/1/89)

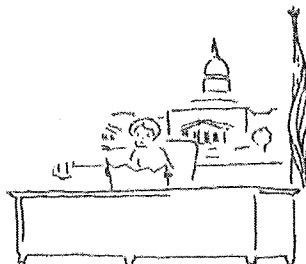
AA to Implement the Recommendations of the Job Reclassification Study of the University of Maine

Summary: Authorizes reclassification of jobs in the clerical, technical, office and laboratory divisions in the UM system to ensure economic parity to/comparable worth with occupations in other divisions.

\$3.5 Million Appropriation for Creation and Expansion of Child Care Services in Maine (Presented by Governor in Supplemental Budget: L.D. 2156, AM.)

Summary: "\$651,000 for 179 contracted state-subsidized slots. (The Dept. of Human Services will be required to designate a specific number of these slots for underserved areas in 3 model rural counties.)

See "Pyramid (page 3) for Details"



ON THE FEDERAL FRONT: ADVOCATING A.B.C.

An Act for Better Child Care, introduced in Congress last November, represents our nation's most ambitious child care proposal to date. Carrying an annual price tag of \$2.5 billion, the measure will provide states on-going support for development and expansion of child care services. The funds are clearly intended to supplement, not replace, states' existing commitments.

The bill has won the bipartisan support of more than 100 members of Congress, including co-sponsors, Reps. Olympia J. Snowe and Joseph E. Brennan. Though unlikely to be fully funded as proposed, the measure in its original form would provide Maine \$11.5 million in federal funds, which would be supplemented by a \$2.5 million state match.

The initiative will boost direct financial assistance to working families needing child care, make available new funds for facility expansion, training services, and loan monies for start-up and expansion of child care businesses, and will further bolster states' enforcement capabilities, child care coordination services, and public education programs.

Maine is well-prepared to administer these funds, having designed its own system under the model proposed by the A.B.C. bill.

The initiative is due for action later this year. Maine citizens are strongly encouraged to contact their Senators and Congressional representatives for their continued support:

U.S. Senators

U.S. Senator William S. Cohen
322 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 21510
(202) 224-2523

U.S. Senator George J. Mitchell
176 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510
(202) 224-5344

U.S. Representatives to Congress (1st District)

Congressman Joseph E. Brennan
Longworth House Office Building,
Room 1428
Washington, D.C. 21510
(202) 225-6116

(Second District)

Congresswoman Olympia J. Snowe
2462 Rayburn Building
Washington, D.C. 20515
(202) 225-6306

For more information on the A.B.C. bill, contact The Office of Child Care Coordination.

(Expanding Horizons -
continued from page 4)

The project, says Beth Warren, Executive Director of USM's Division of Human Resources, represents "a collection and sharing of resources - talent, creativity, and skills." Because individual organizations often find child care options prohibitively expensive, the consortium offers new hope for smaller business, which must also seek new ways to remain competitive in the work-family economy.

"It's exciting," says Warren, "to be on the cutting edge. What we're doing here in Maine can... serve as a model for the nation."

RURAL CHILD CARE

Accompanying this year's funding is a legislative mandate to increase availability of child care services in rural Maine. The OCCC will coordinate a comprehensive study that will examine employment and wage statistics, demographic and population data, and the current availability of child care services in three model rural counties to determine where - and how much - of this year's \$1.6 appropriation for vouchers and increased state contracted slots should be invested in those areas.

(Legislative Session continued)

*AA to Establish the Additional support for People in Retraining and Education Program (L.D. 2390, AM.)

Summary: "ASPIRE", the governor's comprehensive welfare reform program, creates a partnership between the Depts. of Labor and Human Services to administer pre-training, training, and job placement services for AFDC clients. Amendments supported by WLAC and adopted by the Legislature will: 1) prohibit economic sanctions against teen parents who fail to participate in the ASPIRE program; 2) exempt parents with special needs children from participating; 3) require DHS to demonstrate that adequate funds are available to serve the voluntary population before mandating participation by other recipients; 4) require the state (as of 1/1/89) to provide AFDC benefits to eligible first-time pregnant women beginning with the last

trimester of pregnancy; 5) ensure medicaid-like insurance benefits for participants for up to 1 year, and in some cases, up to 15 months, following loss of AFDC benefits resulting from employment obtained through ASPIRE; 6) require DHS to evaluate the operation and impact of the program and report its findings to the Legislature by 2/14/90; 7) automatically "sunset" or repeal the entire ASPIRE program on 7/1/90, unless continued by the Legislature through affirmative vote. WLAC-supported amendments also established specific language to ensure continuation of support services (such as transportation and child care) for participants up to 12 months, and to ensure that DHS administrative rules will apply in service areas governed by DOL alone (through JTS), as well as in "co-located" districts in which both JTS and WEET are present.

*WLAC Bills Not Receiving Approval:

AA to Establish Child Care Availability for Individuals in the Substance Abuse Treatment System (L.D. 2205, AM)

Summary: Proposed to establish 3 pilot child care service programs for individuals entering inpatient substance abuse rehabilitation programs.

Disposition: Unanimous Ought to Pass recommendation for \$300,000 funding request from Alcohol Premium Fund accepted by Legislature without debate. Vetted by Governor.

AA to Enhance Provisions of Head Start Services in Maine (L.D. 2213)

Disposition: Proposed a \$300,000 appropriation to fund a 5% increase in Head Start staff salaries and reinstatement of 30 slots eliminated by federal cutbacks, denied by Appropriations Committee. However, \$100,000 funding request for "maintenance of effort" was proposed and approved in the Governor's supplemental budget.

(Child Care continued from page 2)

Though there is widespread agreement among providers and advocates that the RDC system needs to be more generously supported in future state budgets, the RDCs are fulfilling a critically important role. Despite budget constraints, many RDCs are developing comprehensive, computerized lists of centers and services as a resource for parents, while others maintain resource libraries or offer administrative support services to providers. They will also help administer this year's training funds (\$75,000), and expanded voucher program.

"The RDCs," says Collier "will play a central role for the remainder of the century" in keeping services in step with the demand on a regional basis.

THE CHALLENGES AHEAD

The greatest challenge ahead, says Collier, is the continuous struggle to strike a balance among quality, affordability and availability. It's a tough juggling act to invest equitably in order to produce a balanced, well rounded cache of resources for parents and providers alike.

This year's \$3.5 million package, says Collier, strikes that difficult balance.

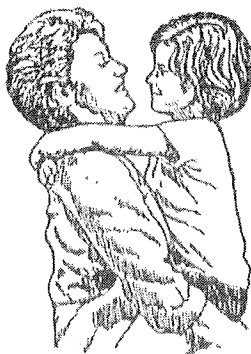
Affordability. The cost of child care imposes a burden for most parents, irrespective of economic status. The average cost of care for one child in the Portland area, for example, is \$120 per week—a prohibitive burden for everyone except the most privileged. The only subsidy for middle class parents, says Collier, is Maine's Child Care Tax credit. In addressing that issue, the Legislature two years ago approved incremental increases in the state's child care tax credit from 15% to 25% of the federal credit over a three year period beginning in 1986 (the credit will "max out" at 25% in the '89 tax year). Though among the most liberal in the nation, Maine's credit provides relatively minimal relief to families ineligible for direct subsidies.

The picture is even less encouraging for families with lower incomes who are fighting a losing battle between escalating child care costs and diminishing subsidies. The culprit, most agree, is the reduction in federal assistance for child care during the last 8 years: child care funding provided through Title XX in 1987, for example, was worth only half as much as in 1977. Fortunately, Maine remains among the more progressive states willing to mitigate those losses by a commitment of state dollars. And, most encouraging is Congress' pending consideration of the "Act for Better Child Care Services"—the A.B.C. Bill—which proposes an unprecedented \$2.5 billion in state aid. (See related story).

This year's state appropriation will boost affordability by investing more than \$1.6 million in direct subsidies.

\$651,000 will fund an additional 179 state-contracted slots, with a certain number designated for 3 model rural counties. (See related story). Another \$1,041,505 will provide for nearly 400 voucher slots, reserved for children of families who earn between 0 - 115% of the median state income.

In addition, the passage of L.D. 2150, AN ACT Providing for Child Care and Child Development Training for Student Parents, sponsored by Rep. Marge Clark of Brunswick, is a landmark as it addresses affordability of child care for Maine's teen parents. This new law will not only allow student parents to continue education by providing free school-based child care, but will also permit school districts to recover those costs through the state education formula.



Quality. Among the indicators of quality child care is, first and foremost, adequate education and training of caregivers.

That a significant number of caregivers still earn little more than minimum wage illustrates the critical need for policy reform and support of the profession. This year's package takes us a step forward in meeting that commitment by providing \$500,000 for 10% salary increases for contract providers, and \$75,000 for additional training for all child care providers.

Another key to quality care—the state's ability to enforce minimum quality standards—will also get a boost this year. \$324,339 will be dedicated for 5 new positions in the state's child care licensing division, 3 new part-time positions in the OCCG, and 4 positions in the Bureau of Social Services contract unit, all of which will enhance the state's ability to coordinate existing resources and ensure compliance with health and safety standards.

Availability. The questions of affordability and quality become moot if the supply fails to meet the escalating demand. Hence, a generous portion of this year's funding package—\$929,500—will be dedicated to the development and expansion of child care facilities and services. These funds will increase support for the RDC system; provide

additional day care services for state employees and dislocated workers; help establish 6 model private sector employer-sponsored sites; boost the number of before- and after-school care slots; and create a revolving loan fund for grants and technical services for new and expanded day care facilities (See Child Care Appropriation Summary for specifics).

WHERE WE GO FROM HERE

Given these successes, we can take great pride in our past efforts, but it's clear we need to continue working and advocating for more and better child care services. What can we do to maintain momentum?

The time is right and resources aplenty for all of us to take part in the effort:

Lobby your legislators and candidates: Both before and after Election Day, let your public officials know that child care issues are important to you. The campaign season provides an ideal opportunity to debate the issue and encourages candidates to think creatively about solutions: ask your local candidates how they specifically plan to address the child care needs of your area once elected to public office. After Election Day, stay informed about child care issues on the legislative agenda, and urge your legislators to support progressive policies and funding initiatives.

Educate your Business and Community Leaders. Contact the Office of Child Care Coordination or your local Resource Development Center. They can provide you with materials to distribute to your co-workers and/or employers about creative child care options, as well as valuable information that will help you, as a parent, become a better, more informed consumer of child care services.

Your local and state leaders will be making critical decisions about the future of child care in Maine. Whether you're a parent, provider, or employer, your advice can make the critical difference!



**ADDRESS CHANGE OR ADDITION?
PLEASE LET US KNOW!**

- ☐ Change of address
☐ Please send Inform to person listed below

Name _____

Address _____

Zip Code _____

UPCOMING EVENTS

Oct. 8

Maine Citizens Against Sexual Assault is sponsoring a conference at UMA. John Ross from Connecticut will be the keynote speaker.

Oct. 19

Women's Business Development Corporation and Small Business Administration is sponsoring a conference for women business owners at the Augusta Civic Center.

**ADULT LEARNING
OPPORTUNITIES**

If you know someone who needs help reading or you would like to tutor call:

1-800-322-5455

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