



**TESTIMONY BY KIM RUSSELL, STATE DIRECTOR, READYNATION
TO THE JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
THURSDAY, May 15, 2025, 10 A.M.**

**IN SUPPORT OF
LD 1859 AN ACT TO IMPROVE ACCESS TO CHILD CARE AND EARLY CHILDHOOD
EDUCATION BY ESTABLISHING REGIONAL RESOURCE HUBS**

Chairs Ingwersen, and Meyer, and distinguished members of the Health and Human Services Committee, I am Kim Russell, State Director of ReadyNation. ReadyNation is a business leader organization dedicated to building a skilled workforce and strong economy by promoting evidence-based policy solutions that prepare children to succeed in education, work, and life. Since August 2024 we have operated under Educate Maine.

I am testifying in support of **LD 1859 AN ACT TO IMPROVE ACCESS TO CHILD CARE AND EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION BY ESTABLISHING REGIONAL RESOURCE HUBS.**

As you will hear many times today, child care is a vital component of Maine's economy and workforce. Working parents cannot work without access to high-quality affordable child care. Yet the systems in place do not make finding child care easy. For too many parents – the current state support for helping find child care is a website. While [Maine Child Care Choices](#) or [Access Maine](#) are resources that share the availability of child care slots within various communities for licensed childcare facilities, including family child care providers, centers, and Head Start programs -- they do not replace a live person to help parents better understand the system, answer questions, and do proper outreach and make application/s to local providers. The websites are also not helpful if they are not regularly updated.

According to the most recent Kids Count Data Book, 69 percent of Maine children under the age of 6 have all available parents in the workforce. Their ability to access reliable child care is critical.

This bill proposes to help parents and communities with this process by establishing four regional early childhood learning and development resource hubs by November 1, 2025. These hubs will be affiliated with existing regional nonprofit organizations to promote early childhood learning, support family needs, and increase access to high-quality early childhood education. These hubs will enhance coordination within each region by functioning as a centralized point of information and resources, will support working families by providing a reliable and up-to-date resource for child care availability and applying to child care programs, and should serve to address the needs we have in so many rural areas that are child care deserts. Key functions also includes conducting regional needs assessments, connecting families to local and state resources, supporting child care educators, and collaborating with employers and programs to meet local child care needs.

LD 1859 represents a needed strategic approach to strengthening Maine's early childhood infrastructure, ensuring that families have the support they need to access quality child care and education services. I urge Committee members to support this proposal.