



Maine Women's Lobby

May 15, 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 1955 "An Act to Increase Child Care Affordability and Early Childhood Educator Stability" and thank President Daughtry for sponsoring this important bill. We're also in support of LD 1736 "An Act to Increase the Supply of Child Care Services Through the Use of Contracts," and LD 1859 "An Act to Improve Access to Child Care and Early Childhood Education", and are grateful for the ongoing efforts to address the many gaps and challenges in our child care system.

Women are the backbone of all paid and 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 make a valid estimate from survey results.²

You've heard the phrase, 'the workforce behind the workforce.' The health and stability of the caregiving infrastructure and workforce must be a priority because, when it falls through, it not only impacts families and children, it impacts all communities, and the entire economy. I also 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

We all agree we must ensure that our economy is predicated on all families being able to access **affordable, high quality childcare**. Without statewide investment in caregiving infrastructure to ensure that all families can access affordable, high quality childcare, women must pay the costs. Maine has made powerful strides forward in recent years and LD 1955 takes the necessary steps to make these changes more permanent and sustainable, especially in relation to better supporting the childcare workforce. The various proposals in this bill will be important steps forward in strengthening many parts of our critical, but fragile, child care and early education infrastructure in our communities.

We hope you will vote Ought to Pass on LD 1955.

Lily Bohen James, Advocacy Coordinator

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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