

Testimony in Support of:

LD 1955 An Act to Increase Child Care Affordability and Early Childhood Educator Stability

May 15, 2025

Senator Ingwersen, Representative Meyer, and Members of the Health and Human Services Committee, my name is Peter Lindsay, I live in North Yarmouth, and I am testifying today on behalf of the Maine Children's Alliance where I have the privilege of serving currently as Chair of the Board.

I recently had a conversation with a professional woman in the Portland area who has a well-paying job and a very promising career. She told me that the day she confirmed that she was pregnant, she called seven child care programs and got on the waiting lists. Only after contacting these service providers did she then call her parents to let them know about her pregnancy. And this is a parent who has resources and had seven programs in her area she could call!

You have heard consistently that child care is both challenging to find and expensive for families, and at the same time critical for Maine workers and our future economic prosperity across the state.

LD 1955 is an important bill that addresses two of the major challenges in our child care system.

First, the bill addresses the affordability of care. Across the state, we have more than 600 families on the waitlist for child care affordability programs. The costs of child care for working parents often exceeds the cost of housing or college tuition. The average annual cost for an infant in Maine is over \$12,500 a year, and that is the average! This bill would help address this long waiting list and make child care more affordable for low- and middle-income families.

Second, this bill addresses access to child care. Unless we address the retention and compensation challenges of the early childhood workers, working parents will continue to struggle to even find child care options in their communities. Low-paid providers, even if they love their work with children and families, often find themselves having to choose a better paying job just to make ends meet for their own families.

This bill targets investments to support early childhood workers in multiple ways including wage supplements, scholarships, apprenticeships, and direct financial assistance for child care professionals.

Will this bill really help to retain early care workers? Yes, this bill will build on the promising results from Maine's current Child Care Educator Wage Supplement Program. Since its introduction, this program has documented a workforce increase of 11% to 15%, reversing trends of high turnover and burnout that have plagued the sector for years.

I know it is challenging to invest in the future during uncertain times. However, working parents and child care providers are facing economic challenges and often awful choices. Families cannot afford child care, and providers cannot afford to stay in the field.

I urge you to vote to support LD 1955. Thank you for hearing my testimony.

Peter Lindsay
440 Mountfort Road
North Yarmouth, ME 04097
207-595-8967
Board Chair, Maine Children's Alliance