

Good afternoon Chairman Ingerwersen, Chairwoman Meyer, and distinguished members of the Health and Human Services Committee.

My name is Chantel Pettengill, and I am the owner of Pettengill Academy. We are a large childcare provider serving the communities of Lewiston for 14 years, Brunswick for 3 years, and Auburn for 1 year. I am also a certified teacher in the State of Maine and a childcare business coach with the Child Care Success Academy, where I work with childcare owners across the United States, Canada, and the UK.

Across our three schools, we are licensed to serve 484 children and currently employ an average of 80 teachers and administrators. I am here today in support of **LD 1414**.

The childcare pay supplement has allowed us to increase teacher compensation without increasing tuition for families who are already struggling to make ends meet. When the monthly bonus is averaged out over hours worked, we are able to pay our teachers approximately **\$1.25 more per hour** because of this supplement.

Without this support, in order to pay those same wages, I would need to raise tuition by approximately **\$1,050 per child per year**. While that amount may not sound significant on paper, for families living paycheck to paycheck, it is a meaningful and often impossible increase.

The proposed additional **\$120 per month for infant and toddler teachers** would allow me to increase wages by an additional **75 cents per hour on average**, again without passing that cost on to parents. As a provider that specializes in infant and toddler care, this support would directly help us retain staff in the most difficult classrooms to hire for.

Regarding the overnight care grant, I do not have a strong opinion. Our centers have explored overnight care in the past and have not found sufficient demand to cover the high cost of nighttime operations. From my perspective, those funds may be better used to expand access to the Child Care Affordability Program and reduce the waitlist families have been sitting on for **12 to 18 months**.

In closing, LD 1414 allows childcare programs to support their workforce while protecting families from tuition increases. It is a practical solution that strengthens childcare programs, stabilizes staffing, and supports Maine's working families.

Thank you for your time and consideration.