

January 21, 2026

**Most Rev. Bishop Robert P.  
Deeley, J.C.D.**  
President

**Rachel Grivois**  
Chairperson

**Stephen P. Letourneau**  
Chief Executive Officer

**Bill Hager**  
Director

RE: LD 1414

“An Act to Support and Sustain Maine’s Child Care  
Workforce”

Senator Ingwersen  
Representative Meyer.

Member of the Joint Committee on Health and Human  
Services

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My name is Bill Hager, I am a resident of Wells Maine,  
and I work for Catholic Charities Maine, which operates  
two full range childcare programs in Southern Maine: St.  
Louis Child Development Center in Biddeford, and St.  
Elizabeth Childcare in Portland.

I am here today to speak in favor of LD 1414, which  
addresses two distinct concerns: ‘The challenges in  
accessing and affording care for infants and toddlers and  
care for the kids of second shift workers.

I would like to make the following Key Points:

- First, we at Catholic Charities would like to thank the Legislature for the progress made in childcare funding over the past two sessions. I can assure this committee that this legislation previously passed, particularly the Childcare Staff Stipend program, has made a significant impact for children and families in Maine. For our two programs, it has allowed us to open additional classrooms which has resulted in a significant increase in the number of families we serve.



- We would urge this legislature to continue this trend, as the work done to date is just a start on what is needed in the childcare world.
- I've been doing this for a very long time, and I can tell you from personal experience of having "been here/done then" that increased public investments is the one thing that has (and will) result in increased capacity and quality.
- Per the Specific of LD 1414, we can speak to both the needs and the importance of this proposal. The need for both infant/toddler care and second shift care continues to increase, driven by nothing less than what we have always referred to as "the livable wage crisis" in Maine. The gap between average family income and those expenses tied to family survival continues to grow.
- Per Infant Care, families no longer have the luxury of "waiting until the child is pre-school age."
- And, speaking specifically for Infant/toddler care, the second issue is that limits the availability of this care is recruiting and retaining good staff, especially for these infant/toddler teachers, where the expense of providing this care is at least double the cost of care for children over 3. This is driven mostly by the legal child/staff ratios, which are 4 – 1 for babies but 10-1 for children over 3.

- **I want to stress, we do not in any way disagree with these standards or child to staff ratios.** We've been providing infant and toddler care for a long time now, and I can reassure you that these very young children do need the additional attention that these lower ratios provide.
- However, while our program provides this care because it is part of our mission (to provide care for those most in need.) Infant and toddler care, from a purely business perspective, right now is a "losing proposition."
- I would re-state that the last time we saw a jump in the availability of infant/toddler care throughout the state was the last time the state made a significant investment if CCAP funding earmarked for these children.
- I would conclude this by re-stating (from previous testimony in front of this committee):
  - We, as providers, share a common goal with State Legislators and officials: We want to see Maine parents be able to be employed and self sufficient, but not at the cost of the well being of our children.
  - These programs funded via the CCAP are made available specifically to working Mainers who are not eligible or choose not to accept traditional forms of Welfare.
  - An investment in these early years does result in a long term savings to the state, in a variety of programs.

- Additional documentation per “Livable Wages,” cost of care and the return on investment is attached to this written testimony.

I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.

Sincerely,  
Bill Hager

<b>Expense</b>	<b>Single Parent Family</b>			<b>2 Parent Family</b>		
	<b>1 Child</b>	<b>2 Children</b>	<b>3 Children</b>	<b>1 Child</b>	<b>2 Children</b>	<b>3 Children</b>
<b>Food</b>	\$6,915	\$10,358	\$13,780	\$10,715	\$13,783	\$16,814
<b>Child Care</b>	\$12,406	\$24,080	\$31,180	\$12,406	\$24,080	\$31,180
<b>Medical</b>	\$8,348	\$8,439	\$8,534	\$9,551	\$9,891	\$10,268
<b>Housing</b>	\$17,487	\$17,487	\$22,374	\$17,487	\$17,487	\$22,374
<b>Transportation</b>	\$11,954	\$15,058	\$17,326	\$15,058	\$17,326	\$19,220
<b>Civic</b>	\$6,224	\$6,871	\$8,810	\$6,871	\$8,810	\$9,774
<b>Internet &amp; Mobile</b>	\$1,491	\$1,491	\$1,491	\$2,061	\$2,061	\$2,061
<b>Other</b>	\$8,771	\$9,189	\$11,046	\$9,730	\$11,046	\$12,254
<b>Required annual income after taxes</b>	\$73,594	\$92,973	\$114,542	\$83,878	\$104,485	\$123,945
<b>Annual taxes</b>	\$12,047	\$15,685	\$21,559	\$12,833	\$15,347	\$19,477
<b>Required annual income before taxes</b>	\$85,641	\$108,658	\$136,101	\$96,711	\$119,832	\$143,422
<b>Hourly Rate for 40 hour per week job:</b>	<b>\$41.17</b>	<b>\$52.24</b>	<b>\$65.43</b>	<b>\$46.50</b>	<b>\$57.61</b>	<b>\$68.95</b>

# Return on Investment: What we Gain when we Invest in Young (under the Age of 5) Children .

Some key graphics.

