



MAINE AFL-CIO

A Union of Unions Standing for Maine Workers

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Testimony of Maine AFL-CIO Legislative & Political Director, Adam Goode, in support of LD 1414, "An Act to Support and Sustain Maine's Child Care Workforce"

Good morning Senator Ingwersen, Representative Meyer, and members of the Health and Human Services Committee, my name is Adam Goode, I'm the Legislative and Political Director of the Maine AFL-CIO. We represent 40,000 working people in the state of Maine. We work to improve the lives and working conditions of our members and all working people. We testify in support of LD 1414 and LD 2066.

The lack of affordable and accessible child care is a huge problem for Maine working families. We have surveyed several hundreds of workers about the issues impacting their lives and child care continues to be one of the most important. Many workers are living paycheck to paycheck and cannot afford the high cost of care. Others face short-staffed shifts because people cannot stay in their jobs due to the availability of affordable child care. Still others are deciding not to have children because they cannot see a future with children in which they can make ends meet.

For several years, the Maine AFL-CIO has supported efforts to improve our child care system. For us, the most critical, immediate need is to invest in the Child Care Affordability Program which helps people afford the cost of care but has had a waitlist for over a year. We urge you to make the necessary investments to ensure the CCAP program is accessible to the families who need it. However, we also know how critical it is that the state reimburses providers enough to cover the cost of caring for young children. If the state fails to do so, providers will not offer slots to subsidy-receiving families, and care will be out of reach for working families. That is why we urge you to support LD 1414.

We also recognize that the workers who care for our children are the backbone of the system we all rely on. In recent years, many of you supported creating the Child Care Employment Award. This program, along with enhanced wage supplements, helped more early childhood educators enter or stay in the field and thereby improved the availability of care. But with funding only secured through the current fiscal year, we urge you to make this program permanent and to fully fund it in the coming year. Failure to do so would represent a significant cut in benefits for hundreds of childcare workers.

We all depend on nurses, firefighters, teachers, and other essential workers to be able to go to work every day. If they do not have child care, they cannot do their jobs, and we all lose. That is why we urge you to support LD 1414, LD 2066, and to fully fund the Child Care Affordability Program.