

**Testimony in Support of LD 1414
Before the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services**

Senator Ingwersen, Representative Meyer, and Honorable Members of the Health and Human Services Committee

1/21/2026

Good Afternoon,

LD 1414 An Act to Sustain Maine's Child Care Workforce

My name is Jennifer Michaud, I am a resident and child care business owner, in Sanford. For the past 20 twenty years I have owned and operated a Maine State Licensed Child Care Program. My program provides care and early education services for children from the ages of 6 weeks to 11 years. Collectively spanning 20+ years, my experience includes direct care and early education to over 500 children in York County. During this time, I have employed over 60 full-time early child care educators and 15 part time educators.

I am here today in strong support of LD 1414, *An Act to Sustain Maine's Child Care Workforce*. Thank you to Senate President Matthea Daughtry for sponsoring this critical legislation.

As an employer, I want to be very clear about the reality on the ground. The **wages our early childhood educators earn are often less than what someone can earn at a local Home Depot or gas station**. Yet these professionals are responsible for the safety, development, and well-being of our youngest children during the most critical years of brain development. That is not sustainable, and it sends a clear message that educators' work is undervalued.

LD 1414 takes meaningful steps to change that. The bill increases **CCAP payment rates from the current 10% above market rate to 20% above market rate**, which is critical.

Market rate does **not** reflect the true cost of care—especially for infants and toddlers. Child care businesses routinely **lose money providing infant and toddler care** because of the low, but absolutely necessary, safety ratios per teacher. These ratios protect children, but they also make infant care the most expensive and hardest care to provide. Without adequate reimbursement, programs are forced to limit slots or stop offering infant care altogether.

This legislation also includes **direct salary supplements for educators caring for infants and toddlers**, ensuring that funds go straight to the workforce—the people doing the work every day. These are not abstract investments. They support the employees who care for the children who *are* the future workforce of Maine.

In addition, LD 1414 proposes a **grant program of up to \$10,000** for child care programs to explore and plan for **non-traditional hour care**, such as evenings and overnight care. Many Maine families work outside the traditional 9-to-5 schedule, and this planning support gives providers the opportunity to responsibly assess how they could meet those needs.

We are asking for a **short-term investment for long-term results**. Children who have access to high-quality early learning experiences are more likely to become strong, contributing adults in Maine's economy. Without action, Maine will continue to lose educators, lose child care capacity, and ultimately lose working families.

It is time Maine steps up and acknowledges that **without sustained child care funding, we all lose in the end**. The consequences of not supporting LD 1414 could be detrimental to the long-term economic health of our state.

It's time Maine steps up and **acknowledges that without stable child care funding, we will continue to lose — not just today, but into the future**. The consequences of not supporting this bill could be **detrimental to the long-term economic climate of our state**.

I urge you to support this bill.

Thank you for your time and consideration.