

Testimony in Support of LD 2066

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

1/21/2026

Good afternoon members of the committee,

My name is Jennifer Michaud, and I am here today in strong support of **LD 2066, sponsored by Senator Ingwersen**, which would make the **CCAP Child Care Employment Award permanent**.

This award is not just a benefit — it is a **lifeline for the child care workforce**. It helps child care employees afford care for their own children so they can continue working in the very field that supports Maine's families and economy. Without it, many educators are forced to leave the profession simply because they cannot afford child care themselves.

Right now, this program is set to **expire on June 30, 2026**. If it is not made permanent, we will lose one of the most practical and effective tools we have to stabilize the child care workforce.

As a business owner, I see the impact of this every day. Our educators are dedicated, skilled professionals, but dedication does not pay bills. When child care workers cannot afford care for their own children, we lose teachers, classrooms close, and families lose access to care. That creates a ripple effect across our entire economy — parents miss work, businesses suffer, and communities feel the strain.

Low wages in the field are identified repeatedly as a key barrier to recruiting and retaining qualified educators, slowing workforce growth and feeding turnover.

Employees who work in early child care & education do not make enough income to cover child care costs. With hourly wages beginning as low as \$15.00 - \$16.50 an hour in this state, we are all well aware that this income does not meet a families' basic living needs. Employees in the early childcare and education workforce need this bill to pass so that they can work and remain in this industry. Our workforce depends on this support.

As for the Employers, such as myself, we cannot afford NOT to charge our employees for their children's child care services when they attend a program. Our profit margins across the state are just too small. Business owners are running out of creative ways to stretch their budgets. With most programs barely scrapping by to keep doors open, it is critical for this employee benefit to remain intact. This bill ensures that employers can keep working mothers in this field employed.

LD 2066 is a **workforce retention bill**. It keeps educators in the field. It supports working families. And it **protects child care capacity across the state**. Making this award permanent

sends a clear message that Maine values the people who care for our children and recognizes that a stable child care workforce is essential to a stable economy.

We are not asking for a temporary fix. We are asking for **long-term stability**. Permanency allows families to plan, educators to stay in their jobs, and programs to retain staff. Without this support, Maine will continue to lose child care workers to other industries that offer better pay and benefits. With it, we give our workforce a reason to stay, grow, and build their careers here in Maine.

I respectfully urge your support for LD 2066 and the permanency of the CCAP Child Care Employment Award.

Thank you for your time and consideration.