



# 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, on Childcare Access and Affordability in LD 2212 An Act Making Unified Supplemental Appropriations and Allocations for the Expenditures of State Government, General Fund and Other Funds, and Changing Certain Provisions of the Law Necessary to the Proper Operations of State Government for the Fiscal Years Ending June 30, 2026 and June 30, 2027**

Senator Rotundo, Representative Gattine, members of the Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs, and Senator Ingwersen, Representative Meyer, members of the Committee on Health and Human Services, 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 are providing testimony with ideas on improving access to child care for workers.

We see areas in this budget that simply come up short for working families. Workers in the United States now work more hours per year than any other industrialized country. Despite working more hours than ever, working people are not reaping the benefits of their labor. Up until the early 1970s it was normal that working people would share in profits when they increased their productivity.

We see no need for workers to struggle given that for the last three and half decades, the net worth of the wealthiest 1% of Americans grew by \$43 trillion<sup>1</sup>. Last fall, the wealthiest 1% held about \$55 trillion in assets — roughly equal to the wealth held by the bottom 90% of Americans combined.<sup>2</sup> The bottom 50% of American households owns just 2% of the nation's wealth.<sup>3</sup>

Today we provide comments on the Health and Human Services portion of the supplemental to reiterate the importance of an investment of \$15 million to immediately move families off the waitlist for the Child Care Affordability Program (CCAP).

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.

We urge you to make the necessary investments to ensure the CCAP program is accessible to the families who need it. 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.

We 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 are clear eyed about the fiscal situation you are in as you work on the supplemental. All of these issues could easily be addressed if the legislature asked wealthy individuals and corporations to pay their fair share. Our struggle to help workers have access to childcare is not due to lack of funding. This is a matter of policy choices.

There is one bill before you that would raise sufficient revenue by creating a “millionaire’s tax” by adding a surcharge of 2% on the portion of a taxpayer’s Maine taxable income in excess of \$1 million. Another bill would increase the top corporate tax rate on income over \$3.5 million from 8.93% to 10%. If you need a third option you could reject wasteful tax giveaways for millionaires and wealthy investors.

Millionaires and the largest, most profitable corporations certainly benefit when workers have access to childcare and when childcare workers have appropriate wages. These are three options you could explore in order to find \$15 million to improve worker’s access to childcare.

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 include a \$15 million ongoing investment in the Child Care Affordability Program, immediately moving families off the waitlist, and investing in the Child Care Employment Award as a proven workforce retention strategy.

<sup>1</sup><https://www.oxfamamerica.org/press/richest-1-in-the-us-grabbed-at-least-987-times-more-wealth-per-household-than-bottom-20-since-1989-new-oxfam-research-shows/>

<sup>2</sup><https://www.cbsnews.com/news/us-wealth-gap-widest-in-three-decades-federal-reserve/>

<sup>3</sup><https://www.peoplespolicyproject.org/2023/10/23/wealth-distribution-in-2022/>