

LD 210 An Act Making Unified 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, 2025, June 30, 2026 and June 30, 2027

Good morning Senator Rotundo, Representative Gattine, Senator Ingwersen, Representative Meyer, and distinguished members of the Appropriations and Financial Affairs Committee and Health and Human Services Committee.

My name is Amy Benoit and I serve as a Teacher and Behavior Analyst at Waypoint's childcare and preschool program in Sanford, Maine, known as Fraser Ford School.

I am opposed to the proposed \$15 million annual/\$30 million biennial cuts to the Child Care Wage Supplement Program. Cutting this funding will be detrimental for the childcare staff who provide this essential service to Maine families. Given the ever-increasing cost of living, childcare wages have not kept pace.

This Child Care Wage Supplement Program has made a significant difference in our ability to hire additional staff, retain those we have, and has provided early childhood educators with a critical supplement to help cover the high cost of living. The wage supplement program has supported early childhood education in Maine by helping provide a reasonable salary to these essential employees, whose care and dedication to these children continues, and who deserve a living wage.

High quality childcare is essential to Maine families and the continued need for this service far out paces the number of slots available. Hiring and maintaining staff in these programs is critical to meet this need, and to provide consistency in the care and education of the children we serve.

I ask you to restore this essential funding to the biennial budget, on behalf of Maine's early childhood educators, and the children & families who require this service.

Respectfully,

Amy Benoit

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