Adrienne Paul
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LD 210

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 Adrienne Paul. I am a daycare owner and live in Steep Falls.

I am opposed to the proposed $15 million annual/$30 million biennial cuts to the Child Care Wage Supplement Program. As a childcare center owner, I see firsthand the dedication and hard work of my staff, who provide essential early education and care to Maine's children. Cutting $15 million annually from the Child Care Wage Supplement Program would be devastating—not only for my educators but for the entire childcare system. My staff rely on these wage supplements to help make ends meet in a field that is already underpaid and undervalued. Without these funds, many of them will be forced to seek higher-paying jobs elsewhere, further worsening the staffing crisis that childcare centers across Maine are already facing. The inability to offer competitive wages means centers like mine will struggle to attract and retain qualified educators, ultimately leading to program closures, reduced availability of child care for families, and higher costs for parents. This wage supplement has been a critical support, allowing educators to continue doing the work they love while maintaining financial stability. Cutting it will not only harm those who dedicate their lives to caring for children but will also disrupt families, businesses, and the economy as a whole. I strongly oppose these cuts and urge lawmakers to prioritize funding for early childhood education. Investing in childcare is investing in Maine's future—its children, its workforce, and its economy.

I am opposed to the proposed $3.6 million annual/$7.2 million biennial cuts to general funds for Head Start. I strongly oppose the proposed $3.6 million annual cut to Head Start funding in Maine because it would have devastating consequences for the state's most vulnerable children and families. Head Start provides critical early education, nutrition, and family support services to low-income families, helping to break the cycle of poverty and prepare children for long-term success. Cutting this funding would mean fewer children receiving high-quality early childhood education, fewer families accessing essential resources like health screenings and parenting support, and a greater strain on already struggling communities. Research consistently shows that early childhood education programs like Head Start improve school readiness, increase graduation rates, and reduce long-term societal costs by decreasing the need for remedial education, social services, and even incarceration. In a time when families are already facing economic hardships, reducing Head Start funding would only widen the opportunity gap and harm Maine's future workforce. Instead of cutting funding, we should be investing more in early childhood education to ensure that every child, regardless of income, has the chance to succeed.

I am opposed to the proposed $2.5 million annually/$5 million biennial cuts and elimination of the Child Care Employment Award. I strongly oppose the proposed $2.5 million cut to the Child Care Employment Award because eliminating this program would have a devastating impact on Maine's child care workforce and families. This award was created to address one of the biggest challenges in child care—low wages that make it nearly impossible for many early childhood educators to afford child care for their own children. In just three months, the program already had a waitlist, proving that the need is far greater than the initial funding. Cutting it now would not only take away crucial financial support from child care providers but also make it even harder to recruit and retain qualified staff in an industry already facing severe shortages. Without this assistance, many educators may be forced to leave the field altogether, reducing the availability of quality child care for Maine families and worsening an already dire child care crisis. Child care professionals deserve support, just like workers in any other essential field. Instead of cutting this funding, we should be expanding it to ensure that those who dedicate their careers to

caring for children can afford to care for their own.