



Good morning Senator Rafferty, Representative Brennan, and Honorable Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs.

My name is Cate Blackford. I am the Public Policy Director for the Maine People's Alliance. MPA is Maine's largest community action organization with over 32,000 members across the state. Our mission is to create a world where everyone has what they need, contributes what they can, and no one is left behind.

MPA supports LD 1520, A Resolve, Directing the Department of Education and Department of Health and Human Services to Study Placing Child Care Facilities in Secondary Schools.

Maine is facing a multi-faceted child care crisis. Many areas of the state are child care deserts¹, where there are more than 3 children under the age of 5 for every child care slot. We also face a deep shortage of early childhood educators. Wages are less than what people can earn at retail establishments and fast food restaurants, and there are not enough opportunities for education and training in early child development.

LD 1520 would study addressing the lack of access to childcare on both fronts, by exploring the establishment of early childhood education on high school campuses in Maine. By co-locating child care facilities with secondary schools, it would examine whether we could potentially create new training grounds and pathways into the field for educators while simultaneously adding locations for care in child care deserts.

This is a solution well worth studying. I urge you to support LD 1520 and funding it from the Study Table.

Thank you for your consideration.

¹ <https://childcaredeserts.org/>