



maineaeYC

Maine Association for the
Education of Young Children

Testimony of Tara Williams

On behalf of the Maine Association for the Education of Young Children (MaineAEYC)
Before the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services, in support of

LD 1113: Resolve, To Direct the Permanent Commission on the Status of Racial, Indigenous and Maine Tribal Populations To Study and Propose Solutions to Disparities in Access to Prenatal Care in the State
April 6th, 2021

Senator Claxton, Representative Meyer, and distinguished members of the Health and Human Services Committee, the Maine Association for the Education of Young Children (MaineAEYC) supports LD 1113. We are an affiliate of the National Association for the Education of Young Children. We are proud to support “Advancing Equity in Early Childhood Education.” It is one the five foundational documents and position statements of NAEYC.

These foundational statements are grounded in NAEYC’s core values that emphasize diversity and inclusion and that respect the dignity and worth of each individual. The statements are built upon a growing body of research and professional knowledge that underscores the complex and critical ways in which early childhood educators promote early learning through their relationships—with children, families, and colleagues—that are embedded in a broader societal context of inequities in which implicit and explicit bias are pervasive.

Advancing equity in early childhood education requires understanding this broader societal context, these biases, and the ways in which historical and current inequities have shaped the profession, as they have shaped our nation. The biases we refer to here are based on race, class, culture, gender, sexual orientation, ability and disability, language, national origin, indigenous heritage, religion, and other identities. They are rooted in our nation’s social, political, economic, and educational structures. Precisely because these biases are both individual and institutional, addressing structural inequities requires attention to both interpersonal dynamics—the day-to-day relationships and interactions at the core of early childhood education practice—and systemic influences—the uneven distribution of power and privilege inherent in public and private systems nationwide, including in early childhood education.
(<https://www.naeyc.org/resources/position-statements/equity-purpose>)

We know that addressing equity in Maine needs to start before formal school, before child care, and in the context of a child’s community. In order to support equity right from the start, we need to address disparities in prenatal care in Maine.