



maineaeYC

Maine Association for the
Education of Young Children

Testimony of Heather Marden,
on behalf of the Maine Association for the Education of Young Children (MaineAEYC),
before the Health and Human Services Committee, in support of
LD 1263: An Act To Create a Separate Department of Child and Family Services

April 13th, 2021

Senator Claxton, Representative Meyer, and distinguished members of the Health and Human Services Committee, my name is Heather Marden and I am writing on behalf of the Maine Association for the Education of Young Children (MaineAEYC).

MaineAEYC promotes high-quality early learning for all children, birth through age 8, by connecting practice, policy, and research. We advance a diverse, dynamic early childhood profession and support all who care for, educate, and work on behalf of young children and families.

MaineAEYC is in support of LD 1263: *An Act to create a separate department of child and family services*. We recognize the immense responsibility of the work directed under the Department of Health and Human Services and in particular, the Office of Child and Family Services.

MaineAEYC represents early childhood education programs, children, families, and the early childhood education workforce. We have seen an increase in new programming to support child care quality over the past few years. We are grateful for this and it is because of the ever expanding opportunities to strengthen our early childhood system in Maine, that we recognize the need for the Department's capacity to expand with it.

Many states have Departments, Bureaus, Divisions, or Offices that specifically are designated to carry out the programming and resources to support Child Care Development Fund programming and spending, partnerships and collaborations, child care workforce development, child care resources and referral agencies, and child care licensing and regulations within their scope of work. Massachusetts has a Department of Early Education and Care, Vermont has a Child Development Division, and New Hampshire has a Bureau of Child Development and Head Start Collaboration just to name a few states surrounding us.

Governor Mill's Economic Recovery Committee highlights in their report that Maine's child care system needs comprehensive reform to sustain Maine's people. We know we are seeing an influx of people moving into Maine that can create a further child care gap in programming

available to working families particularly as we have seen a decrease in child care programs during the pandemic. We support the recommendations outlined in the Economic Recovery report pertaining to child care and the child care workforce. We believe a step toward achieving this type of reform must also be supported by capacity and resources at the state level.

https://www.maine.gov/future/sites/maine.gov.future/files/inline-files/Maine%20ERC%20Report_FINAL_11242020.pdf

REINFORCE AND REIMAGINE Maine's early care and education supports to ensure that parents can go to work with the peace of mind that their children are safe, nurtured, and prepared for success entering school

- Pursue comprehensive reform of Maine's fragmented, public-private early care and education systems to increase access and affordability
- Build a skilled early childhood education workforce to prepare children for lifelong academic and career success.

We are in favor of LD 1263 in appreciation of the work of DHHS and OCFS. We honor the need for administrative oversight, capacity building, and programs and services for a strong child care system.

We ask for your support of LD 1263 to strengthen Maine's programming and resources for children, families, and the child care workforce. Thank you for your time and consideration.