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Testimony of Debra Boyd  
before the Committee on Innovation, Development, Economic Advancement and Business  
in support of

**L.D. 1652: An Act To Build a Child Care System by Recruiting and Retaining  
Maine's Early Childhood Educators Workforce**

May 11, 2021

Senator Curry, Representative Roberts, and distinguished members of the Committee On Innovation, Development, Economic Advancement and Business, my name is Debra Boyd and I'm the CEO of the Old Town Orono YMCA and Piscataquis Regional YMCA. I strongly support this proposal to develop career pathways for early educators, which includes increasing access to affordable professional advancement opportunities and a focus on fair compensation.

*We have found it increasingly more challenging to hire and retain staff within our childcare programs. We are committed to providing a positive learning experience for the children in our care, and believe the training and development of our staff is critical to achieve this vision. Unfortunately, we are unable to afford to pay our staff at a higher level and due to frequent staffing shortages struggle to remove our teachers from the classroom to attend training when it has been offered.*

*The ability to offer higher rates of pay would help us to attract committed and reliable teachers and would help alleviate these staffing shortages. Once we have quality staff onboard, having quick and frequent access to ongoing training for our staff is essential to their ongoing development. The end result will be quality staff providing exceptional learning experiences for our youth.*

Ensuring that all young children have an equal opportunity for healthy growth and development is a long-term investment in Maine's future prosperity. 90% of a child's brain develops as early as five years old, and positive early learning experiences establish strong foundations for the brain's architecture. Early educators play an important role in young children's learning and development. They help set the foundation for children's future success.

Collectively, the YMCA is the largest early care and education provider in Maine. We serve more than 1,500 children at 59 childcare sites across the state. We stand in agreement with our partners in the field, including MaineAEYC, the Family Child Care Association of Maine, the Maine Head Start Directors' Association, and the Right from the Start Coalition, in support of L.D. 1652. With smart investments in our early education system such as this, we can increase Maine families' access to high quality and affordable care and help children reach their full potential.

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