

Testimony of Pam Caron, MSN, LSW, PPNE
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Educator
Resident of Cumberland and Aroostook Counties
Before the Innovation, Development, Economic advancement, and Business Committee
In Support of
LD 1652: An Act to Build a Child Care System by Recruiting and Retaining Maine's Early
Childhood Educators Workforce
Tuesday May 11, 2021

Senator Curry, Representative Roberts, and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Innovation, Development, Economic Advancement, and Business, my name is Pam Caron. I have spent the past twenty years working as an Early Childhood Occupations Instructor at SJVTC and more recently at The LRVC in Cumberland County. I thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of L.D. 1652.

The Power of Profession, is a national collaborative task force that explains that investing in the profession is investing in children because:

“These are America’s children.

The first years are the period of most rapid brain development.

The benefits to children, families, and society are both immediate and long-lasting.

But the extent of the benefits they reap depends on the quality of their experiences and education.

And the depth of that quality depends on the knowledge and skills of the early childhood educators providing it.” (Unifying Framework 2020)

Please allow me to explain why investing in the profession is vital.

Almost four decades ago I started my work in this field. Fresh out of high school, I had a big dream, to own my own childcare center. I did this and I loved my work but after two years realized that financially I was better off taking a position as an assistant director of early childhood at UMFK. One of the main benefits of this job was free tuition. I chose to further my education in nursing, a field that was more readily recognized for its professionalism and thus better compensated.

Twenty years later, a student in my Early Childhood Occupations class was recognized as a gold winner in our national SKILLS competition. Another schoolmate also won nationals in automotive that year. Jeremy came home with thousands of dollars in prizes. Gabbie came home with a ten-dollar bug investigation kit and a book bag. The message was very clear and spoke volumes.

Today almost two decades later, those perceptions still permeate the profession. Students are not pursuing careers in early care and education...Why should they? Sophia a student in my Early Childhood Occupations class has dreamed of working with children since she was a little girl.

She entered our CTE program convinced that this would be her life's work. She has earned 9 college credits and an early childhood certificate in my program. The site where she completed her field experience has offered her a full-time position, but she has passed up this opportunity, not because she doesn't love the work but because she simply can't afford to. The early childhood education field might just lose this incredible young woman, and this is simply tragic.

We need to do better. We need to acknowledge the significance of early childhood, we need to recognize the important role of early childhood educators, and we need to compensate them for the very valuable work they are doing so that people like me, Gabbie, and Sophia are motivated to pursue and stay in the early childhood field ...I urge you to support LD 1652.