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Testimony of Annie Colaluca
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 Annie Colaluca and I'm the Director of Child Care at the Bath Area Family 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.

I am a graduate of Georgia Southern University where I attended college to become a professional educator. I graduated with a Bachelor of Science in Elementary Education. In the State of Georgia, I held a certificate to teach children in Pre-Kindergarten through fifth grade. After moving several times around the country, I became familiar with navigating various state teaching certificate systems. I have held teaching endorsements in Georgia, Colorado, New Jersey, and Maine. However, due to Maine's separate and unaligned system, I was denied several times in the application process. To obtain this certificate, I needed to find the time and financial resources to complete two additional courses. This process proved to be stressful on both my family and professional career obligations. We need to align our credential, degree, and certification requirements in Maine to create a system that works for educators, children, and families.

In my role as the Director of the Bath Area Family YMCA Enrichment program, hiring qualified staff has become a recent and intense challenge. Last year, I spent six months advertising for a vacant teaching position with an 081 endorsement. I had zero people apply for this job. I have worked hard at filling vacant positions in my center, but the challenge of retaining highly qualified staff is a true concern for the future of childcare and early childhood education programs in Maine. We have a workforce shortage in Maine and need policies that will help us recruit and retain professional early childhood educators. We need to bridge the gap between the ECE profession and public-school educators to ensure our youngest learners receive the best possible start.

Please support L.D. 1652 and show the people of Maine that early childhood education is worth a strong public investment. Show Maine that we support the people who work hard every day to educate our youngest learners. The proposed supports would enable teachers and child care center directors, like me, to focus on providing quality early learning for children and families. Policies focused on early childhood educators would have the additional benefit of attracting new educators to our profession.

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