

**Senator Matthea Daughtry**

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## **Testimony by State Senator Matthea Daughtry**

### **Senate District #24**

#### ***Brunswick, Freeport, Harpswell, North Yarmouth, and Pownal***

### **Introducing LD 1652, “An Act To Build a Child Care System by Recruiting and Retaining Maine’s Early Childhood Educators Workforce”**

Joint Standing Committee on Innovation, Development, Economic Advancement and Business  
May 11, 2021

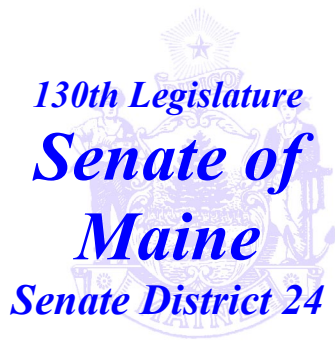
Senator Curry, Representative Roberts and distinguished members of the Committee on Innovation, Development, Economic Advancement, and Business. I am Senator Daughtry and I represent Senate District 24 which is Bailey Island, Brunswick, Freeport, Harpswell, North Yarmouth, Orr's Island, Pownal South Freeport, and South Harpswell. I am here today to as a co-sponsor to speak in support of L.D. 1652, “An Act To Build a Child Care System by Recruiting and Retaining Maine's Early Childhood Educators Workforce.”

Children are our most valuable population and our state’s future. A direct investment in childcare workers is a direct investment in the futures of our children. Childcare lets parents work while their kids are cared for and nurtured during the critical development period. During the entire COVID-19 crisis, early childcare workers have been on the frontlines. They have been finding ways to teach in person and provide necessary supports for families. Early childhood workers are essential workers, caring for the children of nurses, doctors, teachers, grocery store workers, and more. Early childcare workers ensure that kids’ education stays on track when everything else seems so distorted.

In Maine, 73 percent of children under six have all available parents in the workforce, meaning that approximately 54,000 of all children under the age of six need childcare and families must choose what will be best for them. Yet, despite the high demand for early educators, Maine falls flat in terms of supporting early educators and lacks workforce development opportunities. We’re facing a critical point nationally, with fewer and fewer early educators each year. Maine is no exception. Without devoting resources to early childcare workers now, we could face an emergency further along.

This bill is a phenomenal step investing in our early childcare workforce. LD 1652 will offer a needed boost to the early educator workforce at multiple levels and establish a strong network for early educators and incentivize folks to get into the field who may have previously encountered barriers such as salary, technical training, or access to credentials.

The application of career and technical education opportunities, comprehensive scholarships, apprenticeships, salary supplements, accreditation transfers, and incorporating new members of the



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workforce into this bill is a huge step. Maine could continue to build a network of prepared and supported early childcare workers and bolster the field so critical to Maine's economic development and future.

I urge you to support LD 1652, and thank you for your time.