

Chrissie Davis
Family Child Care Association of Maine (FCCAM)

Testimony of Chrissie Davis, On Behalf of the Family Child Care Association of Maine 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

May 11, 2021

Senator Curry, Representative Roberts, and honorable members of the Joint Standing Committee on Innovation, Development, Economic Advancement, and Business, my name is Chrissie Davis and I am providing testimony today as the Public Policy Committee Chair of the Family Child Care Association of Maine (FCCAM). FCCAM's mission is to strengthen quality professional family child care in Maine. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in favor of LD 1652.

The pandemic highlighted that when parents of young children can't go to work, it impacts employers, our communities, and our economy. If we are serious about expanding access to high quality child care for all of Maine's children, we must focus on the child care workforce. A strong and stable child care workforce is the foundation of a strong and stable child care system. The economic impact of investing in the child care workforce would be far reaching. When early educators make livable wages, we reduce the number of families needing public assistance, we reduce staffing shortages in our child care sector, and we support the educators that are supporting the healthy development of our youngest learners.

More and more family child care programs are employing staff so that they may offer additional care slots for children. It is difficult for these programs to offer competitive wages without charging families more (which families cannot afford). The wage stipends proposed in LD 1652 will help supplement the low wages, supporting workforce retention.

Recruiting a diverse, skilled workforce in child care means we must reduce barriers to accessing training and education pathways. This is especially true for immigrants and those new to the workforce. It is vital to create multiple pathways with the goal of strengthening the child care workforce pool. Training and educational opportunities for those in the early childhood workforce must be flexible and transferable across our higher education, adult education, and professional development programs. Coordinating with these varying educational settings allows for greater access in educational attainment and skill development, as well as reduces redundancy in training. Maine needs an equitable credentialing system for child care workers.

The establishment of a system of salary supplements for the child care workforce that is working with children up to 5 years of age recognizing professional credentials, work experience and educational training history, will meet the needs of the diverse child care workforce, while encouraging continual professional growth.

Maine's children and families need a strong, sustainable early care and education system. Without early care and education programs, parents cannot work. Without workers, our state and local economies suffer. Since the teachers in child care programs are a critical part of the system, we need effective strategies to recruit and retain early childhood educators. LD1652 is seen as a positive step in supporting our early childhood workforce and we ask for your support of LD 1652.

Thank you for your time and attention.

Chrissie Davis
Public Policy Committee Chair
Family Child Care Association of Maine (FCCAM)
fccam.publicpolicy@gmail.com