

Testimony of Brittany Foss

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

5/11/2021

Senator Curry, Representative Roberts, and honorable members of the Joint Standing Committee on the Innovation, Development, Economic Advancement, and Business, my name is Brittany Foss, I am a resident of Plymouth, Maine, and I am here today to testify in favor of LD 1652.

Child Care is the foundation that our state is able to grow from. It is important that this foundation is strong to enable the state to flourish in many ways. Child care provides stability for the workforce, a positive space for Maine's children to begin their Education career, and supports Maine's economy. It is now time to support this foundation to create a stronger Maine.

Supporting LD 1652 will help to create a strong foundation by supporting the work force that drives the Early Childhood field. The Early Childhood Education field is in need of support for all teachers. The turnover rate in Early Childhood Classrooms is extreme. Child care programs cannot offer higher wages without increasing the cost of childcare which families cannot afford. The wage stipends in LD 1652 will help to keep teachers in the field. LD 1652 will also support High Quality care and education due to the support of the teachers, with wage stipends, but also by providing support to teachers to continue on with their education and trainings. By expanding access to technical centers, creating scholarships, and access to apprenticeships those who are working in the field of Early Childhood Education will be able to have hands on experience.

The support for LD 1652 will also create access to High Quality child care for more families. With the help from this bill the Early Childhood sector will be given the means necessary to help child care programs that are struggling through the pandemic from needing to close their doors. It will also help them to be able to compensate more staff – leading to more quality child care slots for children. There is a shortage of child care slots in Maine, especially for infants and toddlers.

I writing today, wearing two hats. I am an Early Childhood Educator and I have been for over 10 years. But I am also a new mom who was looking into child care for an infant early this year. When I found out that I was pregnant, in February of 2020, one of the first things that I did was add my child to waitlists for Child care. Working in this field I knew how hard it can be to find an opening, and I knew that I not only needed to return to work, but that I wanted to. Working with children and their families is my passion and I needed a child care slot to be able to do that once my baby was here. Even though I added him to waitlists so early on – there was no openings in the time frame that I needed to go back to work. I emailed and called a handful or more child care centers in my area. Many of them with no openings.

I faced a decision that many families in Maine are facing. Do I leave the workforce because I do not have access to High Quality care for my son?

This decision was something that kept me up late at night, made me shed tears, and caused a lot of apprehension. I love my career. I make an impact on the children and families that I work with that last for years, and so do the rest of the Early Childhood Educators/Teachers in this field. But not having access to high quality care for my son, a place where I knew he would be safe, cared for, and educated, outweighed that passion.

Luckily for me, two weeks before I had to make a decision to go back to work or not, a spot opened up and I was able to access the care that I needed for my son so that I could return to work.

But that is not the case for everyone. There are so many parents in the state of Maine that are in the same position that I just described. LD 1652 will support educators, child care centers, Maine's families, the workforce, and so much more. The ripple effect that this will have on our state would be difficult to measure.

So I am asking you today to support the bill LD 1652, and I thank you for your time today.

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