



FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT®
FOR HEALTHY LIVING
FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

Testimony of Jayci Fournier
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 Jayci Fournier and I'm the Sr. Manager of Youth and Teen Engagement at the Bangor Region 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.

Well qualified Early Childhood Education staff are extremely important to the development of children in the state of Maine. Here at the Bangor Region YMCA as a non-profit it has been increasing challenging to retain high quality staff in our Early Childhood Education programs. Teacher transitions in the past three years have disrupted the programs' ability to run at its highest levels and impacted the work done in our classrooms every day. The amazing staff team that we do have currently have a hard time attending trainings that are offered only during the work day when they are needed in classrooms, and finding highly qualified part time teachers and substitutes has been increasing difficult. The Bangor Y seeks to provide high quality programing for children of all ages and having consistent strong staff with our youngest families increases the likely hood of children staying with us until adulthood.

Ensuring that all young children have an equal opportunity for healthy growth and development is a long-term investment in Maine's future prosperity. 90% of a child's brain develops as early as five years old, and positive early learning experiences establish strong foundations for the brain's architecture. Early educators play an important role in young children's learning and development. They help set the foundation for children's future success.

Collectively, the YMCA is the largest early care and education provider in Maine. We serve more than 1,500 children at 59 childcare sites across the state. We stand in agreement with our partners in the field, including MaineAEYC, the Family Child Care Association of Maine, the Maine Head Start Directors' Association, and the Right from the Start Coalition, in support of L.D. 1652. With smart investments in our early education system such as this, we can increase Maine families' access to high quality and affordable care and help children reach their full potential.

Contact: Jayci Fournier, Sr. Manager of Youth and Teen Engagement, Bangor Region YMCA
P: 207-941-2808 **E:** Jfournier@bangory.org