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Senator Curry, Representative Roberts, members of the Joint Standing Committee on Innovation, Development, Economic Advancement and Business, as the lead staff person for Maine Family Planning, I write in wholehearted support of LD1652, An Act to Build a Childcare System by Recruiting and Retaining Maine's Early Childhood Workforce.

On a personal note, following my wife's death in a car accident at age 39, I faced the harsh realities of a single parent finding reliable childcare in Maine for my 6-year-old daughter. Helping her to cope with the horrific loss of her mother was difficult enough, but added to that was the visceral, completely distracting fear of not really knowing that her various caretakers—when they could be found--were trained and competent to keep her safe while I earned a living to support us. I was very fortunate to have worked for an organization, Maine Family Planning, that accommodated most of my parental responsibilities and the unavoidable work/child conflicts, but I recognize that as a privilege not enjoyed by all working parents.

As the lead staff person for Maine Family Planning, I see on a nearly daily basis the stresses caused by the paucity of child care options in Maine on our employees. And I most certainly hear from our staff about the stresses caused by the lack of child care options among our patients--the logistical barriers associated with the lack of safe, reliable child care.

Maine Family Planning's commitment to reproductive health and justice is expressed in its mission and as a practical matter, through its programs. In addition to providing nearly 28,000 Mainers with access to the full range of sexual and reproductive health services, Maine Family Planning also operates a WIC Nutrition Program in Washington and Hancock Counties, co-located with our family planning centers in Ellsworth, Machias and Calais. We also operate the home visitors service—Maine Families--for parents of newborns in Hancock County, co-located with our family planning and WIC programs in Ellsworth. Our commitment to addressing the needs of our patients doesn't stop in the exam room and yet our ability to help them meet their child care needs for the children they have has been a source of deep frustration.

LD 1652's comprehensive approach to addressing early childhood educators' training and education, compensation and inclusivity is a model of thoughtful and thought-provoking legislating. There are parts of it—particularly the training and education pathways—that our organization is actively exploring in the context of workforce development.

Maine Family Planning, the organization, and I personally, encourage the Committee to vote Ought to Pass on LD 1652.

Respectfully submitted,

George A. Hill, President/CEO

Maine Family Planning