

Testimony of Sarah Mallett

Before the Innovation, Development, Economic Advancement, and Business Committee, in support of **L.D. 1652 “An Act To Build a Child Care System by Recruiting and Retaining Maine’s Early Childhood Educator Workforce”**

May 11th, 2021

Senator Curry, Representative Roberts, and honorable members of the Joint Standing Committee on Innovation, Development, Economic Advancement, and Business, my name is Sarah Mallett and I am a Title 1 specialist in a public school. I live in Sebec.

I had worked in child care for 9 years. I hold a bachelor’s degree in education, and while I very much found passion in teaching 3- and 4-year-olds, the low wages prevented me from paying my student loans. I entered this field because I am passionate about educating young children and connecting with families. I sacrificed my own financial stability to serve the children and families I offered care for.

This past fall, I left my child care program because I could not bear the financial burden anymore. I was forced to make the difficult decision to leave the child care workforce as a highly skilled and trained educator. I wish I were never faced with this decision. With better compensation and educational assistance, I would not have had to make this decision and I could continue to serve our youngest learners.

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 will grow our early childhood workforce, supporting Maine’s future prosperity.