

Testimony of Jordyn Rossignol

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*

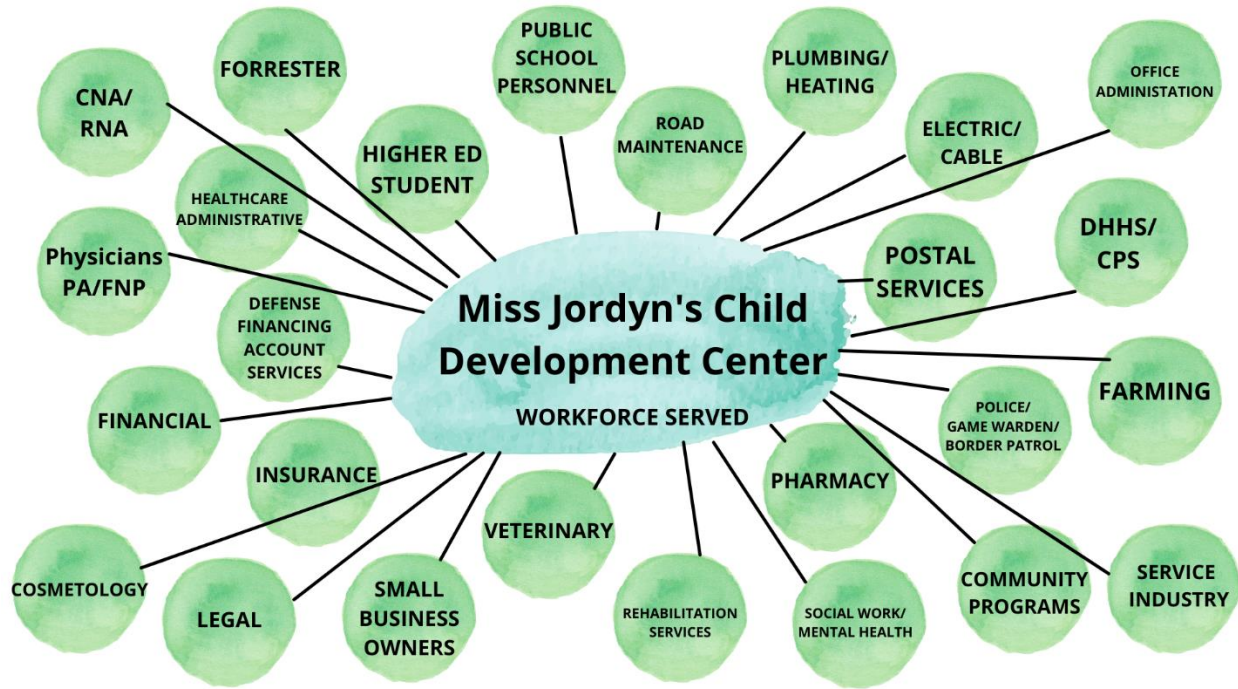
May 11th, 2021

Senator Curry, Representative Roberts, and honorable members of the Joint Standing Committee on Innovation, Development, Economic Advancement, and Business, my name is Jordyn Rossignol, I am a resident of Caribou and owner of Miss Jordyn's Child Development Center. I am here today to testify in favor of LD 1652.

Struggling to find high quality educators to work in my programs is not a new problem, however it has certainly been exacerbated by the pandemic. Our center lost eight staff in three months. We are not losing educators to other educational programs, we are losing educators to other fields completely because of our inability to provide a livable wage. Our center relies solely on the tuition of families to pay our staff. Families already pay high rates for childcare and we cannot increase costs to afford providing our educators better wages, benefits, and high-quality training and education opportunities. We need a public investment to support this work to make this business sustainable and to value the important work that is done in childcare programs.

I want to share a personal example of how this bill might have been able to help my program and will hopefully help my program in the future. I want to share about Shania. She went to school to earn a degree in early childhood education. She was passionate in this field and help shape teaching practices in our program. She supported a non-verbal child to be able to communicate her needs to her teachers and peers. She created a bond with a two-year-old child who had no mother and supported positive relationship building with this child. Shania gave her resignation, not because she was not passionate about the work or because she was unhappy about the field, but simply because she could not continue to survive on the wages lack of benefits that are tied to our tuition rates. I found Shania in the supply closet crying days before her last day, expressing how much she did not want to leave this field. Shania now works across the street at the hardware store. She can be paid more to sell hardware supplies than she can to carry out the very specialized and important work of caring for and educating children. How can we do get Shania back to this workforce and how do we recruit and retain skilled educators for the children that deserve them. It begins with putting policies in place like LD 1652. This bill begins to offer professionalized pathways in the field of ECE and the opportunity to receive a wage stipend for the important work early childhood educators do.

Child care is vital to Maine and staffing our programs needs to be of high concern to keep our programs open. For reference, the picture below shows the workforce served by my Center and the ripple effect it would have on these industries if we were to close.



Our small businesses are unique, we cannot continue to raise the price of our product; caring for and educating young children, and we cannot continue to lose our early childhood workforce. Please support LD 1652 and show your support for the early childhood workforce that keeps Maine's economy running.