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Testimony of Bethany Seger
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 Bethany Seger and I'm the Preschool Manager 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.

High quality Early Childhood Staff are crucial to the success and development of our young people. They are the leaders in laying a solid foundation for a child's path in life. Research has shown the positive impact a quality early childhood education program has on a child's future. Here at the Bangor Region YMCA, like many early childhood education programs, we have experienced a high turnover rate over the past couple of years. The constant introduction of new staff to the classroom causes chaos, disorganization, and high stress situations. We find many highly qualified staff are able to find a higher paying position elsewhere and often do not stay for more than a year or two. The minimal training that is available can be expensive and during business hours when our staff cannot attend. Providing the opportunity for Early Childhood Education Staff to have access to affordable training that works with their hectic schedules would make an enormous difference in the quality of staff our children would have access too. The opportunity for Early Childhood Education programs to offer competitive wages would not be an incentive for staff to pursue additional qualifications but also provide the opportunity to hire and retain already highly qualified staff.

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.

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