



OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT

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To: Senator Chip Curry
Representative Tiffany Roberts
The Joint Standing Committee on Innovation, Development, Economic Advancement
and Business

From: Becky Smith, Director of Government and Community Relations, Bsmith@mccs.me.edu

Re: Statement in support of LD 1652, *An Act To Build a Child Care System by Recruiting
and Retaining Maine's Early Childhood Educators Workforce*

Date: May 11, 2021

The Maine Community College System's mission, laid out in Maine statute, is to provide associate degree, diploma and certificate programs directed at the educational, career and technical needs of the state's citizens and the workforce needs of the state's employers." To this end, we support 1652, *An Act To Build a Child Care System by Recruiting and Retaining Maine's Early Childhood Educators Workforce*.

We believe that to grow Maine's economy, meet workforce needs, support families, and build an education pipeline from early childhood through adulthood, we must ensure that the teachers of our youngest children can obtain credentials of value, have the opportunity to complete associate and bachelor's degrees, and earn a livable wage.

Lack of access to quality childcare for working parents is one of the barriers to our state and her residents realizing our economic potential. MCCS alone cannot solve the childcare workforce problem, but we have Early Childhood Education programs at six of our seven colleges and, in partnership with other providers and Maine policymakers, we can help unlock the potential for more robust childcare throughout the state.

This bill acknowledges the importance of the ongoing collaboration between the CTE's, the Maine Community College System, and the University of Maine System in preparing early childhood teachers. We support efforts to strengthen that collaboration by working with our CTE partners to broaden access to foundational ECE courses through articulation and dual enrollment opportunities. We also support Adult Education as a strong partner in their work with our immigrant and new to the workforce populations as they prepare to enter the workforce and continue their education.

LD 1652 will help support the preparation of the next generation of teachers with funding for scholarships which will help make earning an associate degree attainable. Not only will more early childhood teachers with associate degrees benefit children and families in Maine, but more

teachers with associate degrees in early childhood education are necessary for childcare programs to improve quality.

This bill's focus on wages as well as credentials and degrees is critical. It is very difficult to attract teachers to work in early childhood education, especially with infants, toddlers, and preschoolers, because the pay is so low. Over 50% of educators working in childcare programs receive public assistance. This has the confounding consequence of making the cost of pursuing degrees and credentials that lead to better jobs and higher wages, a barrier for many early care educators. Both the scholarships and the salary supplement provide critical support to the recruitment and retention of early childhood teachers.

We hope that your committee will join us in our support for this crucial bill and vote "Ought to Pass." Thank you.