

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF

L.D. 1652

AN ACT TO BUILD A CHILD CARE SYSTEM BY RECRUITING AND RETAINING MAINE'S EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATORS WORKFORCE

Senator Curry, Representative Roberts and members of the Innovation, Development, Economic Advancement and Business Committee, I am Victoria Wallack, Communications and Government Relations Director for Maine School Management Association, testifying on behalf of the Maine School Boards Association and Maine School Superintendents Association in support of L.D. 1652.

We have known for some time the importance of early learning for children age 5 and younger. The National Centers for Disease Control states that early-learning opportunities can provide a “foundation for children’s academic success, health and general well-being”. We also know that early learning affects brain development.

To support those children, we need a strong early-childhood educator workforce. That goal requires a comprehensive approach to not only attract people into the field, but provide them with the affordable education needed to be most effective in their work.

L.D. 1652 provides such an approach. It starts with expanding the number of early-childhood programs offered through Career and Technical Education; scholarships for college credit classes in the early-childhood field; apprenticeships; and, articulation agreements among the different entities awarding credits.

The other issue this bill attempts to address is salary for early-childhood workers. According to information provided by the Department of Education, there currently are 1,200 teachers certified to teach birth-to-five, but only 486 are employed in that capacity. If salary is the reason that less than half are working in the field, the salary supplement could help. We suggest a survey of those who are certified, but not working in the field, could help us better understand that number.