

Testimony of Alison Britton,

Before the Health and Human Services Committee, in favor of

*LD 1712: An Act To Support Children's Healthy Development and School Success*

May 20, 2021

Senator Claxton, Representative Meyer, and esteemed members of the Health and Human Services Committee, my name is Alison Britton and I am an Early Childhood Education Instructor at Region Two School of Applied Technology in Houlton. I am in support of LD 1712: An Act to Support Children's Healthy Development and School Success.

I support LD 1712, because we all benefit when children and families have access to high quality early childhood programs. And the best way to do that is by creating a strong system with a supported workforce of early educators. The system needs sustainable wages for early childhood educators as well as affordable programs that allow parents and families to secure gainful employment and contribute to the economy.

Each year I watch motivated, dedicated students with the potential to become assets to the early childhood education community choose other professions because of the low earning potential of this line of work. It is heart-breaking to watch, as research has shown over and over again the value of highly-qualified early childhood professionals in the lives of young children. Not only is this a hardship for the potential early childhood educators, but it makes it nearly impossible for families to find high-quality programs where they feel comfortable enrolling their children because current wages lead to high turnover and burnout rates in this field. High turnover and burnout rates among early childhood professionals can also be attributed to the stress they feel when they are unable to provide the necessary resources and supports to the children and families in their care.

This bill would address these issues. Providing additional resources will help attract and retain highly qualified early childhood staff to programs that provide care for our youngest and often most-vulnerable populations. This, in turn, will lead to parents and families accessing quality child care, and feeling comfortable leaving their children in the caring and capable hands of these skilled educators. A strong and stable child care system allows parents and families to engage in employment and support Maine's economy.

I'm asking you to support LD 1712, because we all benefit when high quality early childhood education is available for the children and families in our communities.