

Sponsor Amendment to replace concept draft

LD 1414, An Act to Support and Sustain Maine's Child Care Workforce

Amend the bill by striking out everything after the title and before the summary and inserting the following:

Sec. 1. 22 MRSA §3737-A is amended to read:

§3737-A. Early childhood educator workforce salary supplements

The department shall develop and implement a system to provide salary supplements to child care providers and early childhood educators who provide direct services to children in a child care facility licensed under section 8301-A, subsection 2 or who are family child care providers licensed under section 8301-A, subsection 3. Any salary supplement funding provided by the department under this section to a child care facility or family child care provider must be paid by that child care facility or family child care provider in order to increase wages for any child care provider or early childhood educator who provides direct services to children.

Until June 30, 2023, a child care facility or family child care provider shall distribute salary supplements received under this section in the same amount to any child care provider or early childhood educator who provides direct services to children employed by the facility or provider. Beginning July 1, 2023, the department shall establish by rule and shall implement a tiered system for salary supplements under this section. The rules must provide, at a minimum, 3 tiers based on the education and experience levels of child care providers and early childhood educators. The 2nd tier must provide a salary supplement that is at least 50% greater than the first tier and the 3rd tier must provide a salary supplement that is at least 50% greater than the 2nd tier. The rules must provide an additional salary supplements for any child care provider or early childhood educator who provides direct services to children up to the age of 36 months. Rules adopted under this section are routine technical rules pursuant to Title 5, chapter 375, subchapter 2-A.

Sec. 2. Childcare educator salary supplement for care of infants and toddlers. The Department of Health and Human Services shall amend its rules in Chapter 30, Early Childhood Educator Workforce Salary Supplement System Rules to provide additional salary supplements to early childhood educators who are employed at child care centers or family child care providers who are caring for infants or toddlers. The supplement shall be provided to early childhood educators that are eligible according to the criteria of the current rule and are receiving, or would be eligible to receive, early childhood educator supplements. The additional monthly supplement is \$120, and must be in addition to any salary supplement that is currently received pursuant to the rule. The supplement must begin to be paid to eligible early child educators beginning January 1, 2027.

Sec. 3. Grant program for child care programs providing off-hours care. The Department of Health and Human Services shall develop a grant program to facilitate the

availability of child care between the hours of 6pm and 6am. The grant program must be available for application by directors or owners of child care centers or family child care providers no later than January 1, 2027 for funding awards for use in fiscal year 2027-2028. The grants are for child care providers to hire experts or consultants or dedicated staff to develop a plan for how a provider could and would provide child care services for any portion of time between the hours of 6pm and 6am. The Department of Health and Human Services shall develop the grant program, including the criteria and process for applications, awards, oversight, and any other relevant requirements. Any grant awarded is no more than \$10,000 and is available only on a one-time basis for a successful applicant. Provided that sufficient funding has been appropriated for the purpose, the total amount for grants awarded in the fiscal year 2027-2028 is up to a total of \$500,000 but if the fund is expended before June 30, 2028, no more awards may be granted.

SUMMARY

This amendment replaces the concept draft.

The amendment requires the Department of Health and Human Services to provide additional salary supplements to child care providers and early childhood educators who are providing care to children and toddlers, aged 6 weeks to 36 months. It requires the department to amend its rule Chapter 30, Early Childhood Educator Workforce Salary Supplement System Rules to be amended to provide the additional monthly supplement to employees who are eligible and receiving supplements and are working for child care providers who care for infants and toddlers. Eligible employees are those who are providing direct care to children. Infants and toddlers are defined in the rule as children aged 6 weeks to 36 months. The additional monthly amount is \$120 on top of the supplement available under the current rule.

The amendment also requires Department of Health and Human Services to establish a grant program to facilitate the availability of child care between the hours of 6pm and 6am. The department must establish the grant program so that directors or owners of child care centers or family child care providers may begin applying, no later than January 1, 2027, for funding awards for use in fiscal year 2027-2028. The grants are for child care providers to hire experts or consultants or dedicated staff to develop a plan for how a provider could and would provide child care services for any portion of time between the hours of 6pm and 6am. The grant available is up to \$10,000 on a one-time basis for an applicant. The Department of Health and Human Services shall develop the grant program, including the criteria and process for applications, awards, oversight, and any other relevant requirements. Provided that sufficient funding has been appropriated for the purpose, the total amount for grants awarded in the fiscal year 2027-2028 is up to a total of \$500,000 but if the fund is expended before June 30, 2028, no more awards may be granted.