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TESTIMONY OF CHRISSIE DAVIS

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SUBMITTED TO THE
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
IN SUPPORT OF

LD 1712 "An Act to Support Children's Healthy Development and School Success"

May 19, 2021

Senator Claxton, Representative Meyer, and distinguished members of the Health and Human Services Committee, I am Chrissie Davis, a nationally accredited family child care provider and a partner in Elevate Maine. I am writing to express my strong support for LD 1712 An Act to Support Children's Healthy Development and School Success. I would like to tell you why this legislation is so important to me, family child care providers, and the children and families we serve.

Family child care continues to be a widely-used early care and education arrangement among working parents, particularly in rural Maine. Many parents choose family child care for their young children because of its convenience, flexibility, and intimate family setting. However, as a small business, paying livable wages and achieving the high levels of quality necessary to maximize children's development poses significant challenges. Many family child care providers have limited resources, work long hours, have no support staff, experience a sense of isolation, and have very limited access to professionals trained in supporting individualized and special needs of children and their families.

In LD 1712, the First for ME Program is similar to the current Elevate Maine model that I have participated in for several years. Through Elevate Maine, I have developed a wonderful professional relationship with my coach who provides strategies for learning environment organization, children's behavior management, understanding stages of development to support children's individual needs, curriculum implementation, child assessments, child nutrition and my professional development. My coach also assists me in working with parents to strengthen the home:school connection. In addition, I receive financial support for indoor and outdoor materials and supplies and have access to specialists in education, health, nutrition, disabilities and family engagement. Elevate Maine has offered connections to other family and center providers through joint learning communities. In short, Elevate Maine supports all facets of quality, professionalizes family child care, and helps us develop our small businesses. I believe more providers and the children and families they serve should have access to similar supports to provide high-quality early child care and education.

I sincerely hope you will support LD1712 and the First 4 for ME Early Care and Education Program. You will be providing a wonderful service to Maine's children, their families, and the providers who serve them. Thank you.