



May 9, 2019

Sen. Erin Herbig
Rep. Matthea Larsen-Daughtry
Committee on Innovation, Development, Economic Advancement and Business
Cross Building, Room 202
Augusta, ME 04333

Submitted online

Re: LD 1584, An Act To Attract, Build and Retain an Early Childhood Education Workforce through Increased Training, Education and Career Pathways

Dear Sen. Herbig, Rep. Daughtry, and Honorable Members of the Committee:

I am writing to urge your support of LD 1584 on behalf of MeBIC, a coalition of Maine businesses and associations dedicated to providing information, education and advocacy on immigration and related issues from and for the business and economic perspective.

As you well know, Maine has a shrinking workforce, and needs every available working-age person who is willing and able to work to be able to do so. But many barriers exist, especially for low-income Mainers, including lack of affordable housing near where jobs are available, lack of public or other transportation, and a critical lack of childcare for their children who are not yet school aged. If people - and as a practical matter, this affects women far more than men - cannot find a safe and healthy environment for their youngest children, they simply cannot leave them to go to work.

Part of the insufficiency of available childcare has to do with not enough childcare workers. And that stems in part from the low pay and childcare unfortunately not always being seen as a profession and a career that one can aspire to stay in, as opposed to one that is a stepping stone to other professions that work with young children, such as becoming an elementary school teacher.

LD 1584 attempts to address the childcare shortage by taking concrete steps to shift that culture and create a professional career track for those who might have the aptitude and inclination to care for and educate young children.

However, LD 1584 should go further. In recent years, immigrants have been the source of our net population growth in Maine, and are a critical part of our workforce. Immigrants are well represented in care-giving professions in Maine, and many already work in childcare, either informally, or formally. As written, this bill may leave recent immigrants out of the equation.

The Legislature should make sure that LD 1584 includes language to facilitate inclusion of immigrants who may be relatively new to Maine in the professional training and the career pathway contemplated by the bill.

To that end, MeBIC suggests the following amendments:

- **Add to the proposed 22 MRSA §3740-A, subsection 1, a new subsection 1.D as follows:**

1. Career and technical Education.....

D. Establishing collaborations with local adult education providers of school administrative units to support participants who may need foundational skills development, including but not limited to English as a Second Language, literacy, numeracy, and employability skills, in order to enter and succeed in these programs.

- **Amend the proposed 22 MRSA §3740-A, subsection 3, by adding new language as indicated by the underlined language below:**

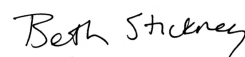
3. Apprenticeships. Expanding the number of apprenticeships available in early childhood child care The apprenticeships must be registered with the Department of Labor and offered in partnership with a professional development network that promotes and supports professionalism in the early childhood child care and education field and that is operated by a state institution of higher education and must meet any additional criteria, including criteria to encourage and facilitate participation of immigrants and other populations that may lack recent or long duration in Maine's workforce, established by rule adopted pursuant to this section; and

Adding these amendments will make sure that all Mainers, whether they have lived in Maine for generations or arrived in this country and in Maine in recent years, who have the interest in working in childcare can have equitable access to the new approaches that LD 1584 contemplates establishing.

This will make LD 1584 even more effective in its attempts to solve Maine's acute childcare shortage issues that prevent individuals from working to the fullest extent that they would wish to.

Thank you for considering MeBIC's suggestions to improve LD 1584.

Sincerely,



Beth Stickney, Esq.
Executive Director