



**State of Maine
131st Maine Senate
Senate Republican Office**

**PRESS BRIEFING – ISSUES REGARDING ACCESS TO AFFORDABLE CHILD CARE
APRIL 11, 2023 – AFTER SESSION (approximately 12:30 p.m.)
WELCOME CENTER/PRESS ROOM**

What: Issues surrounding access to affordable child care

Who: Senators Trey Stewart, Lisa Keim, James Libby, Marianne Moore

Introduction & Background (Sen. Libby)

Maine is in desperate need of child care reform. Access and affordability have been hampered by state regulatory action. Special interests have worked tirelessly to consolidate the industry to center-based care, which is far more expensive for Maine families than family care options.

Over the last 15 years, Maine's family child care industry has been decimated by unworkable regulations. Maine has lost roughly 25% of all providers since 2008. Rural areas such as Washington, Oxford and Androscoggin counties have each lost at least 30% of all providers over that time, while Waldo, York, Lincoln, Knox and Hancock have lost more than half since 2008.

This is especially devastating to working families, because family care is 40-50% cheaper than center-based care on average. While child care capacity in Maine has grown slightly compared to February 2020, these slots are concentrated in fewer providers and within more expensive center-based care. Instead of a broader array of options, the market has consolidated into fewer, larger firms which can withstand the regulatory burden imposed by the state. High prices tell us that capacity alone is not enough to satisfy the market. Mainers need more care options in more areas of the state.

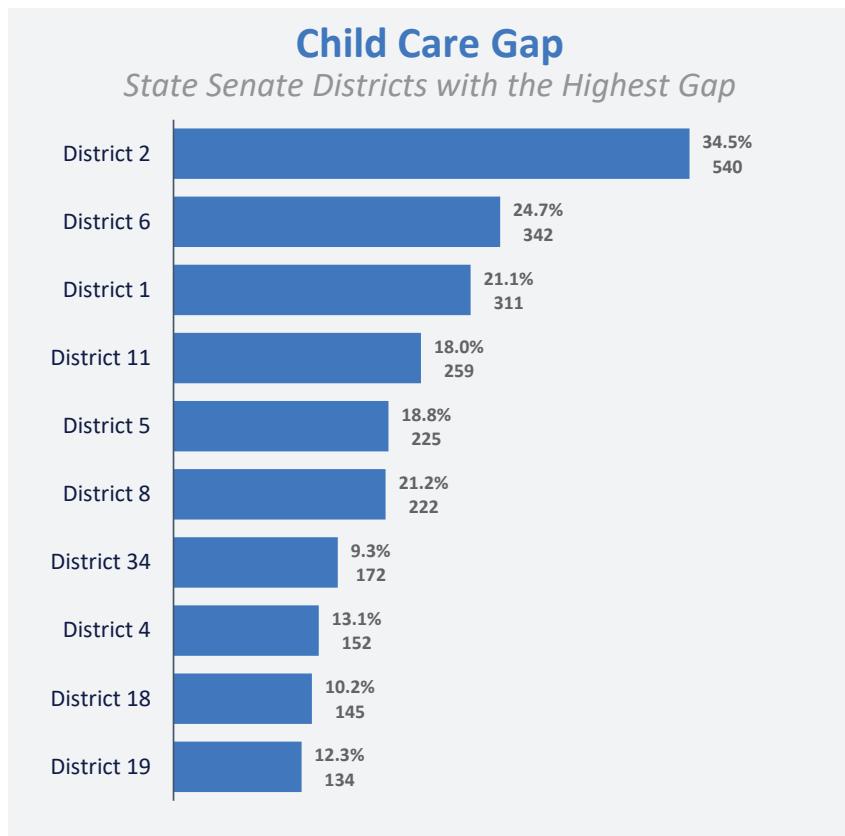
Child care is truly essential. Like education, it is foundational to Maine's economy. A 10% decline in the availability of child care services corresponds with a reduction of employment among single mothers by about three to four percent and up to six percent for married mothers. This was especially evident during the pandemic, which saw 141 providers close permanently and is still affecting access to child care today. When parents exit the workforce to care for their children, families in the U.S. lose about \$57 billion in wages every year. That estimate is about \$180 million in Maine, according to the [Council for a Strong America](#) report.

Pending Legislation (Sens. Keim, Moore, Stewart)

- Expand family care options by increasing the number of children that can be cared for without the need for licensure.
- Increase subsidies to the 75th percentile of local market rates, higher for special needs.
- Reactivate a dormant tax credit for businesses to subsidize/provide employee child care.
- Establish an independent appeals board for child care agencies and providers to handle DHHS disputes involving revocations, suspensions, application denials and retaliation.

Closing remarks, Q/A

State Senate Districts



Note: Based on custom aggregation to 2021 boundaries

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