

**The Maine Heritage Policy Center
Testimony to Oppose LD 1607
“An Act To Create the Department of Early Care and
Learning”**

Senator Millett, Representative Kornfield and distinguished members of the Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs, my name is Adam Crepeau and I am a policy analyst at The Maine Heritage Policy Center. Thank you for the opportunity to testify in opposition to LD 1607.

The Department of Early Care and Learning established in this bill would be responsible for the “high-quality care, health care and education of children younger than six years of age.” A new department is not necessary to provide children under the age of six with the services they need to be successful. As of the 2017 census, there were approximately 78,000 children under six living in Maine.¹ This population is not nearly large enough to create a new executive branch department - we should focus on how to best serve this population with our current tools instead of creating another cabinet-level department.

Not to mention, Maine already has the Maine Children’s Growth Council and the Child Care Advisory Council to ensure the healthy development of children in Maine. Creating an entirely new department with regulatory oversight would seek to limit affordable early learning options for children and their parents. Government intervention has been one of the many factors that has spurred the shortage and high cost of child care. Over 600 child care providers have left the profession since 2008.² This may be due to the additional layers of regulation placed on providers from government in the name of safety.

The Maine Heritage Policy Center is also concerned that creating a new department would result in higher spending and ineffective policy recommendations from the commissioner. There have been several bills submitted this session that would erode parental rights, increase spending for lackluster results and make it more difficult to be a childcare provider in Maine. While this department would assume the role taken on by other departments, its establishment would cost additional funds for which the state has not budgeted and is unlikely to meaningfully impact

¹ Children under six years of age in Maine. <https://factfinder.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?src=CF>

² <https://www.sunjournal.com/2019/01/15/maine-loses-child-care-providers-keeps-capacity/>

children in Maine. In fact, its creation will likely lead to more unwise regulatory policies that make early childhood education prohibitive in Maine.

For those reasons, The Maine Heritage Policy Center urges the committee to vote, “Ought Not to Pass” on LD 1607. Thank you.