

MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE

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132nd MAINE LEGISLATURE

FIRST SPECIAL SESSION-2025

Legislative Document

No. 1955

S.P. 763

In Senate, May 7, 2025

An Act to Increase Child Care Affordability and Early Childhood Educator Stability

Reference to the Committee on Health and Human Services suggested and ordered printed.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "D M Grant", is positioned above the printed name of the Secretary of the Senate.

DAREK M. GRANT
Secretary of the Senate

Presented by President DAUGHTRY of Cumberland.
Cosponsored by Speaker FECTEAU of Biddeford and
Senators: BEEBE-CENTER of Knox, BENNETT of Oxford, INGWERSEN of York, MOORE of Washington, Representatives: DAIGLE of Fort Kent, DEBRITO of Waterville, HASENFUS of Readfield, MEYER of Eliot.

1 Be it enacted by the People of the State of Maine as follows:

2 Sec. 1. 22 MRSA §3731-B is enacted to read:

3 **§3731-B. Maine Child Care Affordability Program Child Care Award**

4 The Maine Child Care Affordability Program Child Care Award, referred to in this
5 section as "the award," is established in the department to provide funding to support child
6 care services for eligible child care providers and early childhood educators who require
7 child care services for their own children. A child care provider or early childhood educator
8 who is eligible for the Maine Child Care Affordability Program established in section
9 3731-A is eligible for the award subject to the following requirements.

10 **1. Licensing requirements; employees.** A child care provider or early childhood
11 educator receiving the award must be employed in a child care facility licensed under
12 section 8301-A, subsection 2 or by a family child care provider licensed under section
13 8301-A, subsection 3.

14 **2. Licensing requirements; children.** A child of a child care provider or early
15 childhood educator who is receiving the award must receive child care services in a child
16 care facility licensed under section 8301-A, subsection 2 or from a family child care
17 provider licensed under section 8301-A, subsection 3.

18 **3. Quality requirements; employees.** A child care provider or early childhood
19 educator receiving the award must be employed in a child care facility licensed under
20 section 8301-A, subsection 2 or from a family child care provider licensed under section
21 8301-A, subsection 3 that meets quality requirements as determined in department rules.

22 **4. Quality requirements; children.** A child of a child care provider or early childhood
23 educator receiving the award must receive child care services in a child care facility
24 licensed under section 8301-A, subsection 2 or from a family child care provider licensed
25 under section 8301-A, subsection 3 that meets quality requirements as determined in
26 department rules.

27 The department shall provide the award directly to the child care facility or family child
28 care provider who provides the child care services.

29 The department shall adopt rules to implement this section. The rules may include
30 limitations of award amounts, waiting list requirements if sufficient funding is not
31 available, quality requirements, qualifications of employees receiving the award,
32 requirements of the child care facility or family child care provider at which the provider
33 is employed and limitations on the number of children on behalf of whom an award may
34 be received. Rules adopted pursuant to this paragraph are routine technical rules as defined
35 in Title 5, chapter 375, subchapter 2-A.

36 Sec. 2. 22 MRSA §3737-A, as enacted by PL 2021, c. 635, Pt. RR, §1, is repealed.

37 Sec. 3. 22 MRSA §3737-B is enacted to read:

38 **§3737-B. Salary Sustainability Program for Child Care Professionals**

39 **1. Program established.** The Salary Sustainability Program for Child Care
40 Professionals, referred to in this section as "the program," is established in the department
41 to support child care professionals who provide services to children in a child care facility
42 licensed under section 8301-A, subsection 2 or under a family child care provider licensed

1 under section 8301-A, subsection 3 by providing salary supplements based on education
2 and experience. Any salary supplement provided by the department under the program to
3 a child care facility or family child care provider must be paid by that child care facility or
4 family child care provider in order to increase wages for any child care provider or early
5 childhood educator who provides services to children.

6 **2. Report.** Beginning on January 2, 2026, and annually thereafter, the department
7 shall submit a report to the joint standing committee of the Legislature having jurisdiction
8 over health and human services matters regarding the number of child care professionals
9 participating in the program, expenditures under the program and progress in implementing
10 the tiered system required under subsection 4.

11 **3. Five-year assessment.** Every 5 years, beginning in 2030, the department shall
12 include in the annual report required in subsection 2, an assessment of the impact of the
13 program and any changes necessary to ensure the program's continued effectiveness. The
14 joint standing committee of the Legislature having jurisdiction over health and human
15 services matters may report out legislation related to the 5-year assessment in any regular
16 or special session of the Legislature in the year in which the 5-year assessment is included
17 in the annual report.

18 **4. Rules; tiered system.** The department shall establish by rule and implement a tiered
19 system for salary supplements under this section. The rules must provide, at a minimum,
20 3 tiers based on the education and experience levels of child care providers and early
21 childhood educators. The 2nd tier must provide a salary supplement that is at least 50%
22 greater than the first tier and the 3rd tier must provide a salary supplement that is at least
23 50% greater than the 2nd tier. Rules adopted pursuant to this subsection are routine
24 technical rules as defined in Title 5, chapter 375, subchapter 2-A.

25 **Sec. 4. 22 MRSA §3737-C** is enacted to read:

26 **§3737-C. Program providing child care provider scholarships and apprenticeships**

27 The department shall develop and implement a program that provides scholarship and
28 apprenticeship opportunities to child care providers and early childhood educators pursuing
29 degrees or certifications related to their employment. The department may contract with
30 qualified entities to manage the program.

31 **1. Scholarships.** The program provides financial aid scholarships to individuals who
32 meet the requirements of this subsection. An individual receiving a scholarship must be:

33 A. Enrolled in or accepted into an accredited early childhood education program or
34 related field and pursuing an associate, bachelor's or graduate degree;

35 B. A resident of this State; and

36 C. Committed to employment in this State as a child care provider or early childhood
37 educator for a period of time determined by department rule after completion of the
38 degree or certification awarded while receiving the scholarship.

39 **2. Apprenticeships.** The program provides apprenticeships to individuals who meet
40 the requirements of this subsection. An individual receiving an apprenticeship must be:

41 A. Employed or seeking employment at a child care facility licensed under section
42 8301-A, subsection 2 or by a family child care provider licensed under section 8301-A,
43 subsection 3; and

B. Committed to employment in this State as a child care provider or early childhood educator for a period of time determined by department rule after the designated apprenticeship period has been completed.

3. Rulemaking. The department shall adopt rules to implement this section. Rules adopted pursuant to this subsection are routine technical rules as defined in Title 5, chapter 375, subchapter 2-A.

Funds for this program may be provided through appropriations from the General Fund, federal funds, grants or private donations; such funds do not lapse to the General Fund. All revenues credited to the fund must be distributed to support scholarships and apprenticeships based on financial need and eligibility as determined by department rules. Scholarships and apprenticeships awarded may not exceed the amount of funding available.

Sec. 5. State Board of Education to develop opportunities for child care and early childhood education programs and courses in career and technical education centers. The State Board of Education shall update its state plan for career and technical education required pursuant to the Maine Revised Statutes, Title 20-A, section 8306 to develop opportunities for child care and early childhood education programs and courses in career and technical education centers. The plan must ensure that educational opportunities are available in all regions of the State as established in Title 20-A, section 8451. The State Board of Education shall collaborate with the centers and regions and with the Department of Health and Human Services. No later than January 2, 2026, the State Board of Education shall submit its updated state plan to the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services and the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs. The committees are authorized to report out legislation to the Second Regular Session of the 132nd Legislature.

Sec. 6. Sustainability of Maine Child Care Affordability Program. The Department of Health and Human Services shall develop a long-term plan that ensures financial sustainability of the Maine Child Care Affordability Program established in the Maine Revised Statutes, Title 22, section 3731-A. The plan must include the necessary level of funding that must be appropriated in order to serve all families that qualify for the Maine Child Care Affordability Program. The department shall submit a report with the long-term plan to the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services no later than January 2, 2026. The committee is authorized to report out legislation to the Second Regular Session of the 132nd Legislature.

Sec. 7. Appropriations and allocations. The following appropriations and allocations are made.

**HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES, DEPARTMENT OF
Child Care Services 0563**

Initiative: Provides funding for the monthly wage supplement awarded to child care workers under the Salary Sustainability Program for Child Care Professionals.

GENERAL FUND	2025-26	2026-27
All Other	\$500,000	\$500,000
GENERAL FUND TOTAL	\$500,000	\$500,000

Child Care Services 0563

Initiative: Provides funding to support the child care needs of families in the Maine Child Care Affordability Program Child Care Award.

GENERAL FUND	2025-26	2026-27
All Other	\$1,000,000	\$1,000,000
GENERAL FUND TOTAL	\$1,000,000	\$1,000,000

Child Care Services 0563

Initiative: Provides one-time funding for the Maine Child Care Affordability Program.

GENERAL FUND	2025-26	2026-27
All Other	\$3,800,000	\$0
GENERAL FUND TOTAL	\$3,800,000	\$0

**HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES,
DEPARTMENT OF
DEPARTMENT TOTALS**

	2025-26	2026-27
GENERAL FUND	\$5,300,000	\$1,500,000
DEPARTMENT TOTAL - ALL FUNDS	\$5,300,000	\$1,500,000

SUMMARY

This bill does the following.

1. It replaces the early childhood educator workforce salary supplement system with the Salary Sustainability Program for Child Care Professionals. It establishes requirements for the program, requires 5-year assessments and provides funding for the program.

2. It enacts the child care staff scholarship program established as a pilot program in Public Law 2023, chapter 643, Part TT as a permanent program in the Maine Revised Statutes known as the Maine Child Care Affordability Program Child Care Award.

3. It establishes a program of child care provider scholarships for early childhood education or related fields to eligible individuals pursuing associate, bachelor's or graduate degrees or certificates in those fields.

4. It establishes a program of apprenticeships for individuals employed or seeking employment at a licensed child care facility or licensed family child care provider.

5. It requires the State Board of Education to update its plan for career and technical education centers to include opportunities for early childhood education and child care education at career and technical education centers around the State.

6. It requires the Department of Health and Human Services to develop a long-term plan for financial sustainability of the Maine Child Care Affordability Program and submit a report to the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services no later than January 2, 2026.

1 7. It requires an appropriation of \$3,800,000 to the Maine Child Care Affordability
2 Program and a yearly appropriation of \$500,000 for wage supplement awards and
3 \$1,000,000 to support child care needs.