

Janet T. Mills
Governor

Jeanne M. Lambrew, Ph.D.
Commissioner



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February 22, 2022

Senator Ned Claxton, Chair
Representative Michele Meyer, Chair
Members, Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services
100 State House Station
Augusta, ME 04333-0100

Re: LD 1834 – An Act To Establish Ongoing Monitoring of Maine's Child Protective Services

Senator Claxton, Representative Meyer, and Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services:

Thank you for the opportunity to share our views on LD 1834, *An Act To Establish Ongoing Monitoring of Maine's Child Protective Services*. This bill would require the Government Oversight Committee and the Office of Program Evaluation and Government Accountability to create a system of ongoing monitoring of the Office of Child and Family Services, including quarterly reporting and an annual report.

While we support the Government Oversight Committee's current practice of periodic and specific engagement, we oppose the concept of permanent, continuous monitoring by the Government Oversight Committee (GOC). The Health and Human Services Committee is the designated and appropriate committee of jurisdiction over health and human services, including child protective services. This committee has a deep understanding of the work of child welfare services in the important context of the other services provided to these families. Many, if not most, children and families engaged with OCFS also benefit from services across the Department, and the oversight of the work of child welfare should take a holistic approach to understanding the entirety of the landscape in which this work is done.

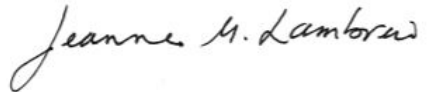
The Office of Child and Family Services (OCFS) has reported on a regular and ongoing basis to this Committee on child welfare services for the last two years, as well as providing statutorily required monthly data reports. In addition, the Department and OCFS leadership have made themselves available whenever requested to present data and information on child welfare and other program areas within OCFS. OCFS also publishes a [Child Welfare Data Dashboard](#) that is updated on a monthly basis, an annual report on child welfare, and public reporting of child fatalities updated quarterly.

A recent OPEGA brief on oversight of child protective services found OCFS is subject to "in-depth regulatory oversight" that is "comprehensive and outcomes-oriented" and that "engages all three branches of government and both public and private sector stakeholders". The Department agrees with this assessment and believes the system of oversight is designed in such a way to

ensure appropriate overlap and connection between the entities, allowing for comprehensive oversight.

Given this information the Department would urge you not to support LD 1834. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jeanne M. Lambrew".

Jeanne M. Lambrew, Ph.D
Commissioner