

**Testimony of the  
Office of Child and Family Services  
Department of Health and Human Services**

**Before the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services**

**Opposed – LD 1874**

Resolve, To Ensure the Continued Provision of Services to Maine Children and Families

**Hearing Date: March 22, 2018**

Senator Brakey, Representative Hymanson and Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services, I am Michael Mahar, Deputy Commissioner of Program Policy and Operations for the Maine Department of Health and Human Services. I am here today to speak in opposition to LD 1874, Resolve, To Ensure the Continued Provision of Services to Maine Children and Families. I would like to offer the following information for your consideration.

LD 1874 proposes that the Department of Health and Human Services ('the Department'):

1. May not reduce or eliminate or redirect to another program or use any service or funding for programs designed to protect children and families, including, but not limited to, Community Partnerships for Protecting Children programs and domestic violence prevention programs; and
2. Shall renew the contracts awarded by the Department for the Community Partnerships for Protecting Children (CPPC) program.

The Department is strongly committed to the prevention of child abuse and neglect in Maine. We are continually reviewing our processes and policies regarding the provision of services, to ensure the most effective methods are employed to prevent child abuse and neglect. As part of this effort, the Department began a review of the CPPC contracts. In early February, the Department determined that changes to these contracts were necessary. This information was conveyed to CPPC providers, in an effort to allow time for these organizations to procure other sources of funds or otherwise adjust accordingly. After this notification, ongoing discussion occurred with CPPC providers regarding the proposed changes, with the Department receiving helpful feedback regarding certain aspects of the services.

The Department considered changes in the CPPC contracts after careful examination of the service array provided by CPPC providers and the service arrays offered by other providers in Maine with a similar mission. The Department identified that Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention Councils (CANs) provided several services that were duplicated by the CPPC service. The Department has a statutory obligation to fund or purchase services from CANs or

their fiscal agent (see: 22 M.R.S.A. §§ 3871-3876). Under 22 M.R.S.A. § 3871, the purpose of CANs are to:

encourage and maintain coordinated community efforts in each county to prevent child abuse and neglect through the provision of family-strengthening programs, including, but not limited to, public awareness activities, child safety education, parent education, support and information for parents, referral to services and training for professionals, and to ensure adequate intervention and treatment for abused and neglected children and their families.

The Department currently provides funding for a statewide network of CANs through a contract with the Maine Children's Trust, with a CAN serving every county in the State. Each CAN conducts an annual analysis of the needs in the county or counties it serves. The Department uses that information to collaborate with the CANs to develop a twelve-month plan for CAN activities each year. These county-specific plans provide for well-researched and coordinated strategies for prevention of child abuse and neglect that span the entire state.

The CANs are responsible for facilitating the community programs as outlined in the plans and are also responsible for the following:

- Reviewing existing data to assess and monitor the extent and causes of child abuse and neglect in its county;
- Coordinating services, utilizing community, state and federal resources to ensure that direct services are being provided to children and families, including education and support services; and
- Providing training to professionals throughout each CAN service area.

The Department funds each CAN council's activities. In the current two-year contract, the Department provided \$4,374,000 to Maine Children's Trust for the CAN councils to fund their prevention activities. Due to the fact that the statutorily required services provided by CAN councils overlap with the CPPC services, the lack of CPPC referral to direct services for children and families, and the lack of current statewide presence of CPPC services, the Department concluded that contract changes were necessary.

Due to the discussion in the above-mentioned meetings with CPPC providers, the Department has openly discussed keeping the Parents as Partners portion of the program in new contracts, which will begin on October 1, 2018.

In addition to concerns regarding the inhibiting of the Department's ability to reduce these specific duplications in provision of services, the Department has significant concerns regarding Section 1 of the proposed bill. The limitation placed on the Department regarding the modification or termination of *any* contract for *any* service designed to protect children and

families, if enacted, will prevent the Department from effectively operating. The language is broad and fundamentally subjective, and possibly applicable to the vast majority of the Department's activities. Enactment would suspend our ability to make fiscal decisions, including those that have been granted by the Legislature through previous allocations and appropriations.

I understand that recent tragedies invoke an emotional response and a desire to take immediate action. This feeling is shared by all of us at the Department. To prevent future tragedies, we must first comprehensively understand our specific strengths and weaknesses in order to make informed decisions. We therefore implore you to allow our internal investigation and the OPEGA investigation and review, and the forthcoming independent Ombudsman evaluation to come to a close before codifying specific contracts and vendors into law.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

**CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT (CAN) PREVENTION COUNCIL**

**COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS FOR PROTECTING CHILDREN (CPPC)**

**Statutory Obligation:** M.R.S.A. Title 22, Ch. 1057

None

**Purpose:**

**Required by statute:**

To encourage and maintain coordinated community efforts in each county to prevent child abuse and neglect through the provision of family-strengthening programs, including, but not limited to, public awareness activities, child safety and parent education, support and information for parents, referral to services and training for professionals

To reduce child maltreatment rates through a flexible, family-centered, multi-system, and community response, supporting vulnerable children and families, by focusing on building protective and promotive factors among families identified as at risk for child welfare involvement

**Responsibilities:**

**The following are required by statute:**

-Review existing data to assess and monitor the extent and causes of child abuse and neglect in its county

-Coordinate services, utilizing community, state and federal resources to ensure that direct services are being provided to children and families, including education and support services

-Provide training to professionals who work directly with children and families

-Provide education and awareness concerning child abuse and neglect and its prevention

**Current Contract:**

Within the demonstration counties (currently five with two more to be added in SFY18) deliverables were updated for work plans to include primary and secondary prevention strategies in multiple domains (individual, relationship, community, and society), to

**Four Core Strategies:**

-Utilize a Family Centered Practice approach to support each family's unique strengths and needs

-Provide Community Hubs for delivery of secondary and tertiary prevention strategies and supports

-Employ Parent Partners to provide support to and empower parents, by serving as advocates, mentors, and navigators

-Offer Preventative Family Team Meetings (PFTM) to families to meet with their supports to utilize shared decision-making to progress toward identified goals

**CPPC structure consists of the following five committees:**

-Governance Committee

-Practice Committee

-Neighborhood Team

-Resident Committee

-Concrete Supports Committee

address identified objectives and achieve reductions in child abuse and neglect within their geographic location. Some specific strategies include State-approved parent education and support models; training for professionals and others who interact with parents; community-level collaboration, education, messaging, marketing, and policy/practice change.

Non-demonstration counties must continue to provide ongoing State-approved parent education and support programming around primary and secondary prevention.

**Funding:**

**Required by statute:**

Grants or funds must be allocated to support existing CAN councils and to assist the establishment of new CAN councils. It is the intent to support a statewide network of CAN councils in each county as resources permit. CAN councils are located within the following agencies:

- Advocates for Children (Androscoggin\*)
- Aroostook Council for Healthy Families (Aroostook)
- Opportunity Alliance (Cumberland)
- Franklin County Children's Task Force (Franklin\*)
- Downeast Community Partners (Hancock)
- Kennebec Valley CAP (Kennebec and Somerset\*)
- Broadreach (Knox and Waldo)
- Healthy Kids (Lincoln)
- Community Concepts (Oxford)
- Penquis (Penobscot\* and Piscataquis)
- Midcoast Maine CAP (Sagadahoc)
- Sunrise Opportunities (Washington)
- Kids Free to Grow (York\*)

Currently funded with General Funds; OCFS contracts with the following four providers:

- Broadreach (District 4)
- Community Concepts (Districts 3 & 5)
- Penquis (District 6)
- The Opportunity Alliance (Districts 1 & 2)

	* = Demonstration Counties (2 more to be added in SFY18)	
<b>Governing Board or Advisory Board of Directors:</b>	<b>Required by statute:</b> Each CAN council shall establish a governing or advisory board of directors. The board must be diverse with broad-based participation in each county.	<b>-Governance Committee:</b> Each CPPC must establish a governance board to include members representing residents, faith communities, local government, police, schools, and other partners of CPPC.
<b>Geographic Locations:</b>	CAN council located in: All Districts	CPPC located in: Districts 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 Not in Districts 7 & 8
<b>Prevention Focus:</b>	Primary/Universal and Secondary Prevention  Wide range of prevention activities for parents and community, dependent upon priorities identified in their county work plan	Secondary/Selective and Tertiary Prevention  Services provided to specific parents who have been identified as at risk for child welfare involvement