

**Senator Chip Curry**  
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**RE: Investigating the Office of Child and Family Services and Child Protective Services**

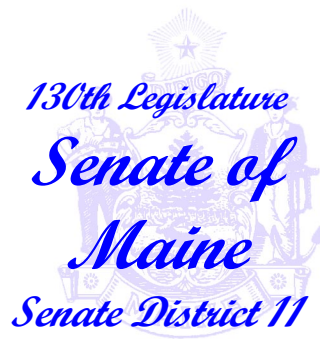
Senator Libby, Representative MacDonald, and Distinguished Colleagues on the Joint Standing Committee on Government Oversight:

My name is Chip Curry. I am the State Senator for Senate District #11, which comprises most of the towns of Waldo County. It is with deep sadness that I write to you today.

I write to you on the behalf of Maddox Williams, Kendall Chick, Marissa Kennedy, and unfortunately, too many other children who lost their lives here in Maine. The death of a child is always tragic especially when it could have been prevented. As we know, two children from Stockton Springs tragically lost their lives due to familial abuse and four other Maine children died just last month.

The Department of Health and Human Services' Office of Child and Family Services and Child Protective Services has failed these children. We said this after the death of Marissa Kennedy when support staff, caseworkers, and other adults in her life failed to intervene before she was killed from years of physical abuse. We said this after the death of Kendall Chick when early intervention and clinical support could have changed the course of her life. Now, we say this again after Maddox Williams, only three years old, had his life cut far, far, too short. There is no excuse for our failure to act on child welfare reform. The deaths of Maddox Williams, along with three others in the last month, prove that our actions have been insufficient.

We have been here before and the Maine Child Welfare Services Ombudsman did substantial work to point out the flaws and holes in our system; and yet, few of these recommendations have been implemented. Despite changes in policies, many of the same basic investigatory and monitoring practices have not changed. Poor support practices, especially in the first month of an investigation, can leave children defenseless for months or years. Seeing as the recommendations made by the Ombudsman were not implemented, I am deeply concerned as to why and what barriers exist that prevent achieving the systemic goals outlined in the report *Child Welfare: An Update on System Improvement Efforts*. If the knowledge and information on how to reform our department and our systems exists, what is keeping us from succeeding and where do we need make further changes? I ask the Government Oversight Committee to work with the



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Ombudsman to identify the barriers to organizational change and possible strategies for overcoming them to build up a more effective child welfare system.

Our Legislature has a responsibility to all of the residents of Maine. We need to be more effective in providing oversight and ensuring the implementation of reforms. If we had been successful in following the recommendations that were available months before, we could have been successful in providing better quality services to families and children and potentially saved lives. Therefore, I also ask the Government Oversight Committee to investigate more effective ways our Legislature can provide oversight and assistance. I understand that the Department of Health and Human Services has brought in an independent investigator who will provide recommendations as well, and I request that the independent investigator work alongside the Legislature so that work can be congruent and result in real solutions.

Inaction will continue to cost Maine children their futures.

Thank you to the members of the Government Oversight Committee and the staff of the office of Program Evaluation and Government Accountability for their time and consideration.