

STATE OF MAINE

—
**IN THE YEAR OF OUR LORD
TWO THOUSAND AND TWELVE**
—

**JOINT RESOLUTION RECOGNIZING MAY AS NATIONAL
FOSTER CARE MONTH**

WHEREAS, the foster care system in the United States provides for on average nearly 424,000 children each day who are unable to live safely with their biological parents, and in Maine, as of March 2012, there were 1,521 children from birth to 21 years of age in foster care; and

WHEREAS, foster parents are the most important caregivers for children who cannot safely remain with their biological parents and provide physical care, emotional support and education advocacy and families with foster parents are the most prevalent form of families providing permanent homes for children leaving foster care, through adoption or permanency guardianship; and

WHEREAS, most children who are removed from the care of their parents live with nonrelated foster parents; however, the number of children placed in relative foster care is growing and, in March 2012, one in 3 of all Maine children living in foster care were living in the homes of relatives; and

WHEREAS, children in foster care who are placed with relatives, compared to children placed with nonrelatives, have more stable placements, have more positive perceptions of their placements, are more likely to be placed with their siblings and demonstrate fewer behavioral problems; and

WHEREAS, as of March 2012, there are 1,252 licensed homes in Maine providing reunification support, foster care, kinship care and preadoptive care; over 800 children entered the Maine foster care system during 2011; and 446 Maine children are waiting to be adopted or placed in permanency guardianship; and

WHEREAS, in fiscal year 2009, almost 57,000 children nationwide were adopted out of foster care, but the number of children "aging out" of foster care without finding a permanent family increased to nearly 29,500; and

WHEREAS, children aging out of foster care need and deserve a support system as they work to secure affordable housing, obtain health insurance, pursue higher education and acquire adequate employment; and

WHEREAS, nationally, close to 30,000 youth leave foster care annually with no permanent family, but in Maine only 127 youth left foster care in 2011 with no identified permanent family; and

WHEREAS, youth in foster care are much more likely to face educational instability, with 65% of former foster children experiencing at least 7 school changes while in foster care and an

increased emphasis on prevention and reunification services would reduce the number of children in foster care; and

WHEREAS, federal legislation over the past 3 decades, including the Adoption Assistance and Child Welfare Act of 1980, the Adoption and Safe Families Act of 1997 and the Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act of 2008, provided new investments and services to improve the outcomes for children in foster care; and

WHEREAS, state and local governments and child-serving agencies have also invested in child welfare services improvements in order to provide stable, permanent homes for children; and

WHEREAS, more work and investments are needed to provide the necessary services to these children, since foster children, like all children, deserve no less than a safe, loving and permanent home; and

WHEREAS, in 2011, 266 Maine children were adopted by relatives or foster parents and 61 children were placed in permanency guardianship, for a total of 327 children who found permanent homes; and

WHEREAS, it is important to provide an opportunity to acknowledge the accomplishments of the child welfare workforce, foster parents, advocacy community and mentors and the positive effects they have on children's lives; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED: That We, the Members of the One Hundred and Twenty-fifth Legislature now assembled in the Second Regular Session, on behalf of the people we represent, take this opportunity to recognize May 2012 as National Foster Care Month, and to acknowledge that we support the goals and ideals of National Foster Care Month; and be it further

RESOLVED: That we honor the tireless efforts of those who work to improve outcomes for children in the child welfare system, we acknowledge the exceptional alumni of the foster care system who serve as advocates and role models for youth who remain in care and we recognize the significant improvements to federal, state and local child welfare policy; and be it further

RESOLVED: That we reaffirm the need to work with existing federal programs to support vulnerable families, invest in prevention and reunification services, promote adoption in cases where reunification is not in a child's best interest, adequately serve those children brought into the foster care system and facilitate the successful transition into adulthood for children who age out of the foster care system.