



SEN. CRAIG V. HICKMAN, SENATE CHAIR  
REP. JESSICA L. FAY, HOUSE CHAIR

MEMBERS:

SEN. LISA KEIM  
SEN. RICHARD BENNETT  
SEN. JILL C. DUSON  
SEN. JEFF TIMBERLAKE  
SEN. MIKE TIPPING  
REP. AMY ARATA  
REP. MARK BLIER  
REP. MARGARET M. O'NEIL  
REP. ANNE-MARIE MASTRACCIO  
REP. H. SAWIN MILLETT, JR.

MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE  
GOVERNMENT OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE

Date: December 3, 2024

To: The Honorable, the Members of the Legislative Council of the 132<sup>nd</sup> Maine Legislature:

The Honorable Mattie Daughtry	The Honorable Ryan Fecteau
The Honorable Teresa Pierce	The Honorable Matt Moonen
The Honorable Jill Duson	The Honorable Lori Gramlich
The Honorable Trey Stewart	The Honorable Billy Bob Faulkingham
The Honorable Matt Harrington	The Honorable Katrina Smith

From: The Honorable Craig V. Hickman, Senate Chair  
The Honorable Jessica L. Fay, House Chair  
131<sup>st</sup> Government Oversight Committee

RE: Child Protection

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On behalf of our fellow members of the Government Oversight Committee (GOC) of the 131<sup>st</sup> Maine Legislature, we would like to take stock of the work we have done and that which remains in the realm of Child Protection. We urge the incoming Legislature to keep this topic front and center.

To that end, please find attached a copy of correspondence that we have requested the OPEGA Director send to the 132<sup>nd</sup> GOC upon the appointment of its Members. We thank you for your assistance and consideration in helping carry this work forward not only by the next GOC and policy committees, but also by the Legislature as a whole.

Attachment



SEN. CRAIG V. HICKMAN, SENATE CHAIR  
REP. JESSICA L. FAY, HOUSE CHAIR

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MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE  
GOVERNMENT OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE

Date: December 3, 2024  
To: Chairs and Members, 132<sup>nd</sup> Government Oversight Committee  
From: The Honorable Craig V. Hickman, Senate Chair  
The Honorable Jessica L. Fay, House Chair  
131<sup>st</sup> Government Oversight Committee  
RE: Child Protection

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On behalf of our fellow Members of the Government Oversight Committee (GOC) of the 131<sup>st</sup> Maine Legislature, we would like to take stock of the work we have done and that which remains in the realm of Child Protection. In this regard, we urge you to help keep this topic front and center among the many important initiatives and challenges ahead. The following two points represent the collective view of the 131<sup>st</sup> GOC Members, including a number of those who have served for the better part of a decade:

- Children dying at the hands of their caregivers have represented perhaps the most profound examples we have encountered in our work of human tragedy experienced by too many of our fellow citizens of Maine; and
- While we acknowledge that the Office of Child and Family Services (OCFS) has been working on recommendations from many entities, including from GOC, we are not satisfied that sufficient progress has been achieved in ensuring that the State's child protective services adequately protect Maine's children.

The 131<sup>st</sup> GOC conducted extensive work in this realm, which culminated in the report "Frontline Perspectives in Child Protection as Catalysts for Reform" in February of this year.<sup>1</sup> Over the two sessions of the 131<sup>st</sup> Legislature, we have also received from the Office of Program Evaluation and Government Accountability (OPEGA) an Information Brief on Child Protective Services Reunification Processes<sup>2</sup> and Four Case File Review Reports, concerning the deaths of Hailey Goding, Maddox Williams, Jaden Harding, and Sylus Melvin.<sup>3</sup>

At our last meeting, held on November 14, 2024, we considered how we might pass this work on to you. At the close of that meeting, we were still awaiting the decision of the Law Court that may have let us better understand the facts of the

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<sup>1</sup> <https://legislature.maine.gov/backend/app/services/getDocument.aspx?documentId=107569>.

<sup>2</sup> <https://legislature.maine.gov/doc/10785>

<sup>3</sup> Hailey Goding <https://legislature.maine.gov/doc/9715>  
Maddox Williams <https://legislature.maine.gov/doc/9997>

Jaden Harding <https://legislature.maine.gov/doc/10422>

Sylus Melvin [https://legislature.maine.gov/uploads/visual\\_edit/rr-cfrsm-22-opega-final-report-3.pdf](https://legislature.maine.gov/uploads/visual_edit/rr-cfrsm-22-opega-final-report-3.pdf)

individual child death cases, in Executive Session. To that end, we held off on any Work Session(s) to endorse, endorse in part, or not endorse, OPEGA's reports.

We offer you the following recommendations:

- Require regular updates from OCFS on progress in implementing GOC and OPEGA recommendations concerning Child Protection;
- Include as part of committee orientation detailed briefings by OPEGA and others, as appropriate, on this subject;
- Consider the role and challenges of the Maine Judicial Branch, which the 131<sup>st</sup> GOC did not include in its work for a variety of reasons; and
- Once the Law Court issues a decision in the subpoena enforcement matter of GOC v. DHHS, the 132<sup>nd</sup> GOC should take up whether the Case File Reviews performed by OPEGA should be endorsed, endorsed in part, or not endorsed, following a Work Session or Work Sessions. Consistent with prior committee practice, when deemed necessary<sup>4</sup>, the 132<sup>nd</sup> GOC can and should consider publishing committee Addenda to be posted online alongside the OPEGA Reports, to reflect any distinct committee perspectives on the reports.

Finally, we have asked the OPEGA Director to include this correspondence prominently in the orientation materials for the 132<sup>nd</sup> GOC.

Thank you.

cc: Members, 131<sup>st</sup> Government Oversight Committee

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<sup>4</sup> See Government Oversight Committee Addendum to OPEGA's Information Brief on State Funding for Good Will-Hinckley (January 2016) <https://legislature.maine.gov/doc/944>