



132nd Maine Legislature

February 14, 2025

The Honorable Craig Hickman, Co-Chair
The Honorable Anne-Marie Mastraccio, Co-Chair
Government Oversight Committee
c/o Office of Program Evaluation and Government Accountability
82 State House Station Augusta, ME 04333

Dear Chair Hickman, Chair Mastraccio and Fellow Committee Members,

As reported last September by WMTW's 8 Investigates, many daycare owners have been struggling with late payments from the Maine Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) for foster children in their care. One provider mentioned that DHHS owed her over \$33,000 in back pay, and it took her more than two years to be reimbursed. Another daycare provider stopped accepting foster kids altogether due to the lack of payments, while a third now relies on foster parents to follow up on invoices just to make sure she gets paid.

This is clearly a big problem. Not only does it put serious financial strain on providers who depend upon timely payments, it is also causing some to stop offering care to foster children altogether. These delays could potentially affect the well-being of the children who need care.

To get a clearer picture of how widespread this issue might be, 8 Investigates submitted a FOIA request to DHHS. The request was for two years' worth of data showing when daycare invoices were submitted and when payments were made. However, DHHS responded by saying it would take four years to redact the data and would cost over \$250,000 to fulfill the request. This is unacceptable. 8 Investigates made a similar request to another state agency, which said they could do it in just a month for \$250.

Additionally, when asked how many invoices DHHS processes each week, a spokesperson admitted they didn't know. Daycare providers submit invoices in different ways – by mail, email, fax or in person – and each invoice goes through several steps before being approved. The lack of a comprehensive tracking system makes it impossible to tell just how many invoices are in the system or how long they've been waiting to be processed. This lack of organization is troubling and must be addressed.

The Legislature has heard these complaints repeatedly. However, we believe it is now time for the Government Oversight Committee to take a closer look at how DHHS is handling these payments. Foster children depend on consistent, quality care; and daycare providers should be paid on time for the work they do. We cannot allow providers to be left waiting for years to be reimbursed.

Thank you for your time and attention to this important matter

Sincerely,

Handwritten signature of Jeffrey Timberlake in black ink.

Jeffrey Timberlake
State Senator

Handwritten signature of Brad Farrin in black ink.

Brad Farrin
State Senator

Handwritten signature of Richard Bennett in black ink.

Richard Bennett
State Senator