



131st MAINE LEGISLATURE

FIRST REGULAR SESSION-2023

Legislative Document

No. 506

S.P. 223

In Senate, February 9, 2023

**An Act to Improve the Child and Family Court Process by
Increasing the Number and Duties of Family Law Magistrates**

Reference to the Committee on Judiciary suggested and ordered printed.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'D M Grant'.

DAREK M. GRANT
Secretary of the Senate

Presented by Senator BALDACCI of Penobscot.
Cosponsored by Representative: MOONEN of Portland.

1 **Be it enacted by the People of the State of Maine as follows:**

2 **Sec. 1. 4 MRSA §183, sub-§1, ¶D**, as amended by PL 2021, c. 647, Pt. B, §1 and
3 affected by §65 and amended by c. 723, §6, is further amended by amending subparagraph
4 (4-B) to read:

5 (4-B) Requests for access to confidential Department of Health and Human
6 Services child protective records in accordance with Title 22, section 4008. The
7 family law magistrate may review records in camera to determine whether to grant
8 access; and

9 **Sec. 2. 4 MRSA §183, sub-§1, ¶D**, as amended by PL 2021, c. 647, Pt. B, §1 and
10 affected by §65 and amended by c. 723, §6, is further amended by enacting a new
11 subparagraph (4-C) to read:

12 (4-C) Except for final prehearing conferences, all pretrial and interim elements of
13 a child protection proceeding brought under Title 22, chapter 1071, including child
14 protection proceedings consolidated in an action brought under Title 19-A; and

15 **Sec. 3. Additional magistrates.** No later than August 1, 2025, the Chief Judge of
16 the District Court shall employ 24 family law magistrates and the State Court Administrator
17 shall provide necessary staff for 24 family law magistrates.

18 **SUMMARY**

19 This bill increases the number of family law magistrates to 24 by August 1, 2025 and
20 increases related staff. It authorizes family law magistrates to hear and dispose of all
21 pretrial and interim elements of child protection proceedings, except for final prehearing
22 conferences.