

Testimony of Melissa Hackett

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LD 258, An Act Making Unified Appropriations and Allocations from the General Fund and Other Funds for the Expenditures of State Government and Changing Certain Provisions of the Law Necessary to the Proper Operations of State Government for the Fiscal Years Ending June 30, 2023, June 30, 2024 and June 30, 2025

To the Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs

May 17, 2023

Senator Rotundo, Representative Sachs, and esteemed members of the Appropriations and Financial Affairs Committee. I am Melissa Hackett, submitting testimony on behalf of the Maine Child Welfare Action Network. We are a group of organizations and individuals working to ensure the safety and well-being of all Maine children, youth, and families.

Specifically, the Network would like to lift up for your consideration two items in the Health and Human Services portion of the change package, related to initiatives outlined in the newly released state Child Safety and Family Well-being Plan,ⁱ which focuses on efforts to keep children safe by keeping families strong. The Network has been proud to work alongside partners in DHHS and OCFS, in collaboration with other state and community partners, as well as families, to inform the development of this plan that outlines how we can work together to support the health and well-being of Maine families.

The two initiatives in the Purchased Social Services program include \$750,000 in one-time funding to develop and implement a resource hub and communications campaign to reduce stigma for parents in accessing supports and services and to elevate the universal message that parenting is hard and seeking help is a strength; and \$335,000 in one-time funding for the development and implementation of coordinated community-based strategies to support and strengthen families.

Additionally, the Network supports the proposed:

- \$7 million to bolster direct response to the opioid crisis and funding to support substance use prevention, treatment, and recovery;
- \$8 million to catalyze improvements to children's behavioral health care;
- \$12 million for foster care and adoption assistance;
- \$2.3 million to expand the Maine Apprenticeship Program;
- \$4 million to double the state's refundable child care tax credit;
- \$15 million to expand eligibility for the Low-Income Assistance Program; and
- \$5.9 million to expand High-fidelity Wraparound Services.

Furthermore, our Network strongly encourages the committee to review and support the strategic legislative and budget initiatives outlined in the Child Safety and Family Well-being Plan, as critical investments that in total would represent a \$153 million investment in state and community programs and services to keep Maine children safe by keeping their families strong. Thank you.

ⁱ <https://www.maine.gov/dhhs/sites/maine.gov.dhhs/files/2023-05/Maine%20Child%20Safety%20and%20Family%20Wellbeing%20Plan.pdf>