

March 7, 2025
Joint Committee on Veterans and Legal Affairs
Maine State Legislature

Re: Public Comment in Support of LD818

Dear Chairs Hickman and Supica, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Louisa Duggan, and I am the Policy Director at Vote Mama Action Fund, Inc. I am submitting testimony on behalf of the organization in strong support of LD818 introduced by Rep. Cloutier.

Childcare obligations are one of the major factors families consider when weighing their decision to run for office. In many states, it costs more to cover an infant's childcare than to make a mortgage payment. This is not an expense working families can take on — especially when campaigning for public office.

Having young children should never deter any parent from considering a run for office. By making this one simple change, we can support young families and their need for safe and affordable care while on the campaign trail. There is ample evidence for why this issue is critical. For example, Vote Mama Foundation, a leading non-partisan 501(c)(3) entity that provides research and analysis on the political participation of mothers, has conducted extensive research related to the importance of access to Campaign Funds for Childcare (CFCC) nationwide.

In 2018, the Federal Election Commission approved federal candidates' option to spend campaign funds on childcare through a unanimous, bipartisan vote. This paved the way for other federal candidates to do the same.

Since the 2018 ruling, Vote Mama Foundation has published extensive data-driven research and analysis on this issue¹ and found a monumental increase in CFCC—**the usage of campaign funds spent on childcare expenses has increased by 662% at the federal level.** Over 68 federal candidates—both moms and dads, Democrats and Republicans—have used their campaign funds for childcare in 90 races. The increased usage of Campaign Funds for Childcare expenses since the 2018 FEC ruling shows how important this resource is for working parents. However, this ruling does not apply to candidates running for state and local office.

As of today, 39 states and the District of Columbia have brought their state statutes in line with federal regulations. States like California, New York, Vermont, and Washington all allow for candidates to use their campaign dollars on childcare expenses.

This extensive nonpartisan research underscores that when candidates can use campaign funds on childcare expenses - they will. Since 2018, CFCC usage has increased by 2,156% at the state & local level. The increase is particularly salient among historically underrepresented people who face additional barriers when running for and serving in office. A majority of the funds spent by women candidates at both the federal and state levels on caregiving services were spent by women of color. **At the state and local level, 70% of funds were spent by candidates of color.**

¹ See <https://www.votemamafoundation.org/reports/cfcc2024>;
<https://www.votemamafoundation.org/cfccutilization>

CFCC has been utilized by 87+ state & local candidates in 13+ states. At least \$297,582 was spent on caregiving expenses from 2018 - 2022 by candidates nationwide. Over \$1 million has been spent on CFCC at the state and federal levels since 2018. We know this vital resource matters in who can run for office, up and down the ballot, across the country, *regardless of political ideology*.

In 2024, the Federal Election Commission expanded this allowance to broader dependent care expenses - allowing federal candidates the ability to use campaign funds on dependent care expenses directly related to campaign activities.

Campaign Funds for Childcare is a bipartisan initiative for moms and dads alike.

I urge the Joint Committee on Veterans and Legal Affairs to support LD818 and vote the bill out of committee. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Louisa M. Duggan".

Louisa Duggan
Policy Director, Vote Mama Action Fund, Inc.