



Committee on Health and Human Services

Re: LD 541 - An Act to Promote Awareness of the Maine Parentage Act

March 13, 2025

Senator Ingwersen, Representative Meyer, and distinguished members of the Committee on Health and Human Services, my name is Heide Lester, and I am a resident of Paris and the Deputy Director of EqualityMaine, which has been advocating on behalf of Maine's LGBTQ+ community since 1984. We strongly support building awareness of the Maine Parentage Act, a set of state laws that were passed in 2016 and strengthened in 2021.

The Maine Parentage Act clarifies the ways someone can legally establish that they are the parent of a child, and addresses who is able to establish legal parentage and how. It extends an accessible path to parentage for children born through assisted reproduction and for children born through surrogacy, and it secures greater protections and equal treatment for children of LGBTQ+ parents. In short, the Maine Parentage Act ensures that all children in the state have equal access to a secure parent-child relationship, which is essential for a child's health and well-being.

The law allows many LGBTQ+ parents in Maine to establish parentage through a simple form, ensuring parents are able to have their legal relationship to their child recognized immediately at birth or any time before the child turns 18. Yet many parents or those who hope to become parents are not aware that establishing parentage will allow them to make any early medical decisions in a child's life, ensure that a child will receive insurance benefits or inheritance rights, and protect parents' parental rights if they separate. Others believe that having their name on a child's birth certificate is sufficient. And some are confused or intimidated by the terminology and processes.

Over 20% of LGBTQ+ adults in Maine are raising children,¹ and they can face challenges in building their families and keeping them safe. We are so fortunate to live in a state that recognizes the diversity of families and provides pathways to a legal parent-child relationship. We urge you to vote "Ought to Pass" on LD 541. Providing informational brochures about the Maine Parentage Act is a simple yet effective way to improve children's long-term well-being and stability.

Thank you,

Heide Lester (they/them)
Deputy Director, EqualityMaine

¹ "Movement Advancement Project: State Profiles." *Movement Advancement Project | State Profiles*, www.lgbtmap.org/equality-maps/profile_state/ME.