



April 4, 2025

Senator Henry Ingwersen
Representative Michele Meyer
Representative Kathy Irene Javner
Honorable Members of the Committee on Health and Human Services
Maine State Legislature
c/o Legislative Information Office
100 State House Station
Augusta, ME 04333

RE: Testimony in support of LD 1060 - An Act to Provide Funding to Reduce Stigma for Parents Seeking Support

Dear Senator Ingwersen, Representative Meyer, Representative Javner and the honorary members of the Health and Human Services Committee:

My name is Richard A. Hooks Wayman, and I am a resident of Portland, Maine. I have the honor of serving as the President & CEO for VOA Northern New England which is headquartered in Brunswick. VOA Northern New England is a faith-based, community nonprofit that works with households experiencing deep poverty, disabilities, and homelessness. I am also a foster-adoptive father to six children and a member of the Maine Child Welfare Action Network.

As a child advocate and a nonprofit director of housing and human services across Maine, VOA witnesses families impacted by deep poverty, disabilities, and the child protective system. For years we have asked that child welfare services move 'upstream' to prevent child maltreatment. The Be There for ME is one of the most important system reforms Maine has undertaken in the past decade. As part of Maine's Child Safety and Family Well-Being Plan, child welfare experts, impacted families, and public officials at DHHS have recognized that the pathway to decreasing child neglect and maltreatment is to bolster the social and economic wellbeing of families and reduce the stigma of asking for help.

LD 1060 would offer continuing funding to reach families. In this modern, digital world we reach parents not only through word of mouth but through digital communication. Funding is needed to make critical updates to the DHHS Be There for Me website and conduct media promotion of the campaign. At \$100,000 per year, this seems to be a low-cost, high-impact investment to support Maine children and families!

Thank you for considering my testimony. I am grateful for your public service and leadership.

Sincerely,

Richard A. Hooks Wayman, President & CEO
VOA Northern New England

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