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LD 891

Hello my name is Raychel Ward and I am from Livermore Falls Maine. I am here today in support of LD891 and LD1397z I have written my testimony to these bills together as they are oddly intermingled.

We need to remove poverty from the “Willful Neglect” parameters. The need for this comes from a world where parent have little control of circumstance. jobs that used to pay well above minimum wage have not increased wages with the rise of minimum wage and our ability to work has been slashed by the highest costs of childcare I’ve seen in my lifetime.

A parent doesn’t choose poverty when they leave their abuser to protect their children
A parent doesn’t choose poverty when the Big Lots store they worked for the last 25 years shutters and closes its doors

A parent doesn’t choose for their spouse to leave and refuse to support their children while the go through the lengthy family court process.

All of this to say it’s not willful by any means. They didn’t choose poverty and this is why it should be excluded from the definition of Willful Neglect.

In regards to the hat do we don’t help these families? We also pass LD 1397 to fund public programs to reduce the need for CPS involvement. I believe in my whole heart stable, supported family do not cause intentional harm to their children. To be a stable supported family the whole family must have access to behavioral health services, basic and specialty health care, the ability to work but having safe and affordable caregivers for their children, and a hand finding resources when they can’t find them. Bethereforme.org has done a great job pulling resources together but even then some available resources are hard to find.

Thank you for your time and please move forward with an ought to pass on LD891 and LD 1397