

# Maine Chapter

INCORPORATED IN MAINE

American Academy of Pediatrics

DEDICATED TO THE HEALTH OF ALL CHILDREN®



## Executive Committee

President

Brian Youth, MD, FAAP

Vice President

Anne Coates, MD, FAAP

Treasurer

Jeffrey Stone, DO, FAAP

Secretary

Genevieve Whiting, MD, FAAP

Immediate Past President

Laura Blaisdell, MD, MPH, FAAP

## Board of Directors

Mahmuda Ahmed, MD, FAAP

Joseph Anderson, DO, FAAP

Rebecca Brakeley, MD, FAAP

Amy Buczkowski, MD, FAAP

Melissa Burch, MD, FAAP

Adrienne Carmack, MD, FAAP

Gabriel Civiello, MD, FAAP

Alyssa Goodwin, MD, FAAP

Allison Grover, MD\*

Deborah Q. Hagler, MD, MPH, FAAP

Dan Hale, MD, FAAP

Jennifer Jewell, MD, MS, FAAP

Stephanie Joy, MD, FAAP

Emily Keller, MD, FAAP

Alton Kremer, MD, PhD, FAAP

Michele LaBotz, MD, FAAP

Lawrence Losey, MD, FAAP

Sophia Martens\*\*

Christopher Motyl, DO, FAAP

Valerie O'Hara, DO, FAAP

Calvin Schaffer, MD\*

Andrea Tracy, MD, FAAP

Lara Walsh, MD, FAAP

Afnan Yahya\*\*

Margaret Zamboni, DO, FAAP

\*Resident Board Representatives

\*\*Medical Student Representatives

## Staff

Dee Kerry, BS

Executive Director

Emily Belanger, RN, BSN

Education & Membership Manager

Madeleine DesFosses, BA

Public Health & Advocacy Manager

Tiffany Harrington, MBA

Development Director

30 Association Drive, Box 190

Manchester, ME 04351

office: 207-622-3374

[www.maineap.org](http://www.maineap.org)

## Testimony in Support of LD 891: An Act to Exclude Poverty as a Factor When Determining Instances of Willful Neglect or Abuse of a Child

### Committee on Health and Human Services

April 8, 2025

Senator Ingwersen, Representative Meyer, and Esteemed Members of the Committee on Health and Human Services,

My name is Madeleine DesFosses, and I am submitting this testimony on behalf of the Maine Chapter, American Academy of Pediatrics (Maine AAP). The Maine AAP is a professional organization of 300 pediatricians and subspecialists dedicated to protecting the health of Maine children and adolescents. We write in support of LD 891.

There is a clear, but often misunderstood, difference between poverty and neglect. Families struggling to meet basic needs should be met with support, not punishment and stigma. LD 891 is a necessary step toward making sure our child welfare system recognizes the difference between true willful neglect and the challenges of living in poverty.

Too often, families experiencing housing instability, food insecurity, or lack of access to other resources and everyday necessities are subject to interventions that do more harm than good. Rather than labeling these families as abusive or neglectful, we should be directing resources to help them meet their children's needs safely and with dignity. There are several bills this session, including LD 1061, An Act to Increase Community Support for Families in Maine, that seek to support and provide resources to families experiencing such hardships. LD 891 works hand in hand with these pieces of legislation to support families and protect kids.

LD 891 ensures that poverty alone will not be used as a reason to separate children from their families. It affirms our responsibility to address the root causes of poverty, rather than responding with punitive measures that only exacerbate the circumstances.

We urge the committee to vote in favor of LD 891 and help Maine move toward a more just and compassionate child welfare system.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Madeleine DesFosses

Advocacy and Public Health Manager, Maine AAP