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Testimony of Representative Michael Brennan in opposition to
**LD 555, An Act to Create a Separate Department of Child and Family
Services**

Before the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services

Senator Ingwersen, Representative Meyer and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services, my name is Michael Brennan, and I represent House District 115, which is part of Portland. Thank you for the opportunity to share my concerns about **LD 555, An Act to Create a Separate Department of Child and Family Services**.

When I served in the State Senate, I had the opportunity to chair this committee, and our focus then – as yours is now – was on ways to protect and best serve the children of Maine and their families. At that time, we made a number of improvements to the child welfare system and our human services programs more broadly. By 2010, Maine was considered a national model in child welfare reform, gaining recognition from policy experts for our efforts to provide support and keep families together while keeping kids safe.

Tragically, we have seen the pendulum again swing away from the proven strategies we had begun to employ in those days – and instead of rebuilding the supportive systems that once worked for Maine families, LD 555 would actually take our state in the opposite direction by creating artificial silos and barriers to collaboration.

The overwhelming majority of children and families involved with the state's child welfare system need multi-systemic responses that cross state agencies. Isolating the system within its own department makes serving those families more difficult, less efficient and, ultimately, less effective.

To help Maine children and families thrive, we should be looking at ways to integrate state agencies, improve support for families and increase collaboration across programs.

Thank you for your thoughtful consideration.