

Written Testimony in Support of LD 2105, An Act to Update Maine's Mandated Reporting Laws

Heidi Aakjer, Executive Director, Maine Children's Trust, January 27, 2026

Senator Ingwersen, Representative Meyer, and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services: My name is Heidi Aakjer, and I am the Executive Director of Maine Children's Trust. Our mission is to strengthen families and coordinate statewide efforts to prevent child abuse and neglect before it occurs. I am writing today to express our strong support for LD 2105, which seeks to modernize and clarify Maine's mandated reporting statutes.

The framework for mandated reporting in Maine is a cornerstone of child safety, yet it requires updates to ensure it is serving families effectively. As we have discussed in similar legislative sessions regarding the distinction between poverty and neglect (such as LD 1406), clarity is essential for those on the front lines supporting children and families.

Mandated reporters—including teachers, healthcare providers, and child care workers—often face ambiguity in the current law. The proposed changes to the law will support the following:

1. Strengthening Professional Competency

- **Frequent Skill Refreshers:** Increasing training from every four years to every two years ensures that providers remain current on identifying signs of distress and understanding the latest resources available to also support families.
- **Direct Knowledge Mandate:** By requiring the person with firsthand knowledge to report, the bill removes administrative layers. This ensures the most accurate information reaches OCFS, reducing the risk of errors that can harm families.

2. Streamlining the Reporting Process

- **Role Clarity:** Replacing the specific list of professions with a "professional duties" standard creates a clearer definition for who the mandate applies to, based on their interactions with children.
- **Predictable Timelines:** The 48-hour window provides a clear, standardized expectation for providers, ensuring that concerns are addressed swiftly while allowing a small window for professional due diligence.

3. Improving the Support Ecosystem

- Centralized Legal Notification: Shifting the responsibility of notifying the District Attorney to DHHS allows providers to remain focused on the family's immediate needs and support, rather than navigating complex legal hand-offs.
- Focus on Integrity over Fear: Removing the penalty for failure to report shifts the culture from one of punishment or avoidance to one of proactive professional responsibility, encouraging providers to view reporting as a tool for family safety rather than a legal threat.

LD 2105 provides the necessary updates to ensure that mandated reporting is a tool for safety, not a barrier to support. By updating these laws, we empower mandated reporters to:

1. Distinguish Between Risk and Resource-Need: Ensuring families get community-based help rather than an investigation when the issue is related to a hardship.
2. Improve Data Accuracy: Clearer reporting standards lead to better data, allowing Maine Children's Trust and our partners to focus prevention efforts more effectively.
3. Strengthen Families: When reporting is handled with clarity and precision, it reinforces a collaborative approach to child safety and family well-being.

In conclusion, Maine's children deserve a system that is both vigilant and compassionate. LD 2105 moves us toward a reporting structure that prioritizes the well-being of the child while respecting the integrity of the family. I urge this committee to vote "Ought to Pass" on LD 2105. Thank you for your time and your commitment to Maine's families.