

Janet T. Mills  
Governor

Jeanne M. Lambrew, Ph.D.  
Commissioner



Maine Department of Health and Human Services  
Commissioner's Office  
11 State House Station  
109 Capitol Street  
Augusta, Maine 04333-0011  
Tel: (207) 287-3707; Fax: (207) 287-3005  
TTY: Dial 711 (Maine Relay)

Testimony of the Office of Child and Family Services  
Department of Health and Human Services

Before the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services

Testimony neither for nor against LD 1229, *An Act to Support Peer Mentors for Parents Involved in the Child Protective Services System*

Hearing Date: April 21, 2023

Senator Baldacci, Representative Meyer and Honorable Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services, I am Bobbi Johnson, Associate Director for Child Welfare at the Office of Child and Family Services. I am here today to provide the Committee with information regarding LD 1229, *An Act to Support Peer Mentors for Parents Involved in the Child Protective Services System*.

LD 1229 would provide one-time funding for initiatives geared towards parents involved in the child welfare system, specifically classes to understand the Child Protective Services (CPS) system and peer recovery coaches for those with substance use disorder (SUD).

Ensuring parents are educated about the child protective process may have some positive impact for those that engage, but the class itself is not reaching enough families to have a meaningful impact on the system. As of September of 2022, only 22 parents out of the thousands currently involved in the child welfare system have engaged in this class despite major outreach in the pilot. OCFS believes the existing structure of the class could be modified to improve access by parents, including the option of an online recording of the class which would significantly lower cost, as well as removing barriers to participation for parents.

OCFS is supportive of peer recovery coaches for parents with SUD, and we have been advancing this program using Overdose Prevention Task Force funding (announced in the Governor's budget address). OCFS and OBH need time to implement this recently announced program and conduct an evaluation to determine the impact and model for long-term sustainability before additional funding is allocated.

Thank you for your time and attention. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have and to make myself available for questions at the work session.