

Senator Nicole Grohoski, Representative Joe Perry and members of the Taxation committee. First of all I would like to thank you for the opportunity to be here and give my testimony. My name is Selma Tinta, I am a resident of South Portland. Today I would like to testify about LD 1544.

As a mom, it's hard not being able to provide extra activities, or create beautiful moments for our children that will help them to have a successful career in the future. My daughter can't wait to start her gymnastics class and my son every day asks us when he will start his basketball class. Because rent, food and the basics come first, It's very hard to get extra classes for our kids and most of them being once a week, means it's very expensive. At the same time, I know for their future success, it's so important for kids to have opportunities like this. Because of the first necessities, it feels like we're forced to leave our kids' dreams behind. It's frustrating. Investing in our kids is the best we can do to help them to achieve great careers and futures here in Maine.

If LD1544 would pass my husband and I we might be able to do something for our children. Like us, there are so many parents in the same situation that LD 1544 would provide a little comfort or bring some happiness for our kids.

Ever since I moved here, I've been involved in the South Portland community, advocating especially for our kids and families. There's an idea around the world that poverty doesn't exist in the U.S. but I know now this is far from true. I saw the American Dream on television, everything is beautiful, everyone has a fancy car, everyone thinks it's like Times Square everyday. It's not like tv, there's serious poverty here and a lot of people are really struggling. The most painful part of seeing poverty in my community is to see the impact it has on Maine kids. The stress of poverty can impact our kids. If I'm not good, my kids know. When a family doesn't know how to afford their home, stress can cause problems for a whole family.

The expanded Child Tax Credit gave low income families across the country a little bit of peace. It was a chance to get ahead for once but now it's gone. The benefits we saw during that brief time included a big drop in the child poverty rate and a drop in hardship experienced by kids in our community. I saw it with my own eyes as I was working to help people access the Child Tax Credit. What it meant to people to get the Child Tax Credit - I got very emotional, people calling me in brightness and happiness. Very grateful. Extra money makes a difference. It was Christmas time. Preparing for the winter, keeping our kids comfortable in the cold. One mother said to me: "I can get great boots and a jacket for my son. He can go to school warm and comfortable." It makes a difference.

My son, Derick, will be 8 years old in 12 days. How do I know this? He tells me everyday. He is counting down the days. He is expecting something for his birthday. How will I do something special for him? This is an example of a time if LD 1544 passed I can save that money to make a difference in my kids life every year.

Maine has a chance to be a leader and make something important happen for Maine families today. Please vote yes on LD 1544.