

Hello members of the committee and thank you for being here today.

My name is Raychel Ward and I am a Maine state Parent Ambassador from Livermore Falls, Maine and I am here to share my lived experience. I support LD1544.

During the pandemic, my family was lucky enough to benefit from the expanded child tax credit. These payments made it easier to support my children. Ashlee is eight years old and Winter is now four years old. Both my children are on the autism spectrum and have varying sensory and safety needs. Safety needs cannot always be planned for. For example when Winter was 2 1/2 years old, she learned how to open her window and screen. A window that due to our landlord's neglect, we could not lock. Mainecare denied our need for a door and window alarm citing her age. The child tax credit allowed us to purchase those alarms, as well as pay the very inflated rent out of our own pocket.

When the child tax credit payment ended, we were forced to make difficult choices. As a parent, we will always rise to the occasion and figure it out but I do ask you to please consider this and vote ought to pass.