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***Testimony of Rep. Anne Graham in opposition to  
LD 1544, An Act to Improve Economic Security for Maine Children by Establishing the  
Maine Dependent Tax Credit  
Before the Joint Standing Committee on Taxation***

Senator Grohoski, Representative Perry and the esteemed hard workers of the Taxation Committee, I am Rep. Anne Graham and I serve the communities of North Yarmouth and Gray. I am here to testify in strong support of **LD 1544, An Act to Improve Economic Security for Maine Children by Establishing the Maine Dependent Tax Credit.**

I want to thank you for considering this bill. As a member of the Health and Human Services (HHS) Committee, a retired pediatric nurse practitioner and a mom, the bill that Leader Terry has proposed is beyond impactful. Many, many bills before HHS deal with child welfare. Our increasing rates of mental health illness, adolescent and young adult suicide have reached crisis proportions. We, on HHS, work on passing legislation that may help our children with severe problems. We prefer to focus on prevention. LD 1544 will help with that. Additionally, the Department of Health and Human Services and the Governor have made clear that addressing children's health is a key priority.

The Children's Cabinet, reinstated in 2019 after an eight-year hiatus, aims to ensure that "all Maine youth enter adulthood healthy, connected to the workforce and/or education, with a primary focus on ensuring the basic needs of youth and their families are met." While the Cabinet outlines many avenues to increase important programming and services for families, the power of cash should not be ignored, as it has administrative simplicity on its side and is backed by research demonstrating direct impact on the immediate economic stability of families with children and those children's ability to achieve in school and thrive later in life.

According to federal census data, combined with other relief efforts, the expansion of the federal credit helped lower child poverty by more than 40 percent between 2020 and 2021, reaching a record low of 5.2 percent. It gave families the ability to put food on their table, buy gas for their car, afford child care so they could go to work and pay their rent or mortgage. During the period of the expanded federal credit, we learned that a little bit of targeted support goes a long way. A Maine child tax credit will restore that help and support more Maine families. It is quite simple, pay now or pay later.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today.