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

Before the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services

In support of LD 2095, *An Act to Require Reporting of Child Abuse and Neglect to Military Family Advocacy Programs*

Sponsor: Senate President Jackson  
Hearing Date: January 31, 2024

Senator Baldacci, Representative Meyer and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services, my name is Bobbi Johnson and I serve as the Director of the Office of Child and Family Services (OCFS) in the Department of Health and Human Services. I am here to testify in support of LD 2095, *An Act to Require Reporting of Child Abuse and Neglect to Military Family Advocacy Programs*.

This bill would require that when the Department is investigating a report of alleged child abuse and neglect the Department will collect information concerning the military status of the parent or legal guardian and share that information with the appropriate military authorities. The bill also directs the Department to develop a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with the family advocacy programs at military installations. This model has been successful in other states.

We are grateful to the Department of Defense for engaging with OCFS on the bill and accepting our input. We are also collaborating with them to better understand how family advocacy programs function and the support they offer to military service people involved in investigations of alleged child abuse and neglect. OCFS believes that in situations where an adult involved in an investigation or case is a member of the armed forces there are benefits to collaborating as much as possible with the military. They provide support related to ensuring the safety of the children and the family and can work directly with their member to ensure appropriate supports and services. We believe involving the Department of Defense in this manner is important given the nature of the work of many military workers.

If this bill is passed, OCFS will update its policy to provide guidance to staff investigating reports to make sure this information is shared appropriately pursuant to this statutory mandate. OCFS will also establish the required MOU using the template provided by the Department of Defense.

Thank you for your consideration, please support LD 2095.