



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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***Testimony of Representative Holly B. Stover presenting
LD 2049, An Act to Increase Safety for Child Welfare Services Workers
Before the Joint Standing Committee on Transportation***

Good afternoon, Senator Chipman, Representative Crafts and esteemed members of the Transportation Committee. I am Holly Stover, and I proudly represent the Towns of Boothbay, Boothbay Harbor, Edgecomb, Southport, South Bristol and Westport Island. I am here to present *LD 2049, An Act to Increase Safety for Child Welfare Services Workers*.

This proposed legislation seeks to provide an exemption from the mandatory display of distinctive registration plates for state-owned vehicles regularly utilized to protect children. Originating from the Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS), this bill is a strategic initiative aimed at improving the safety and well-being of OCFS staff when engaged in child welfare activities in the field.

The relationships between child protective services and families can be challenging. The presence of a Child Protective Services (CPS) worker in a home for assessment or ongoing services can be uncomfortable and, for some parents, a threatening experience. Some parents, however, use the experience to enhance their parenting skills or engage in necessary mental health or substance abuse treatment. In recent years, OCFS has observed a significant increase in threats and violent incidents directed at child welfare staff, mirroring a broader trend reported by child welfare agencies nationwide.

This bill is being introduced at the request of OCFS employees who consistently face threats while performing their duties. Threats and incidents are reported on a weekly, and sometimes daily, basis, with caseworkers regularly encountering risks to themselves and their families. Harassment, stalking, and physical harm are not uncommon, prompting OCFS to formally request a reconsideration of the requirement for specialized license plates on state vehicles, including those operated by child welfare staff.

The current system, which mandates easily identifiable license plates for state vehicles, heightens the risk of OCFS staff being targeted. This legislation aims to enable OCFS staff to operate in the community without drawing undue attention that could compromise their safety. By offering a

straightforward preventive solution, this bill enhances staff safety and eliminates the need for reactive measures following a threat or incident.

Thank you for your time. I am available to address any questions you may have.