



March 10th, 2025

Senator Hickman, Representative Supica, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Veterans and Legal Affairs;

I join you today on behalf of the Maine Women's Lobby. For over forty years, the Maine Women's Lobby has worked to build gender justice in Maine through legislative advocacy and systems change.

We are here today in support of LD 818, "An Act to Allow Expenditure of Maine Clean Election Act Funding for the Care of Candidates' Dependents" and we thank Representative Cloutier for sponsoring this important bill.

As you all know well, running for office is an often expensive and time-consuming endeavor. An added element to that is for parents or caregivers who must pay for care services they would not otherwise have needed. Maine is the only state in New England that does not allow campaign funds to be spent on childcare and/or care services directly related to campaign activities.¹ This lack of access to campaign funds for dependent care creates barriers to running for office.

Women are especially impacted by Maine's block on using campaign funds for dependent care. The responsibility of caregiving disproportionately falls to women, and dependent care is already a substantial expense for Maine's families, making the logistical and financial burden of coordinating care a significant barrier to women running for office.²

Nationally, roughly 18% of women have children under eighteen. Yet, only 6.75% of legislators in Maine are women with children under eighteen.³ The perspectives of young parents and those caring for dependents is valuable, yet severely underrepresented in the State House. Caregivers bring unique perspectives to the legislature and should not have to opt-out of running because of the caregiving costs. Their lived experience as caregivers can help them shape our caregiving infrastructure, such as childcare, direct care, paid family and medical leave, and other forms of economic supports that acknowledge and compensate care and caregiving. This bill empowers and enables those who are caring for dependents to use Maine's Clean Elections program and run for office.

We hope you will vote 'ought to pass' on LD 818. Thank you for your time, and I'm happy to answer any questions you may have.

Lily Bohen James, Advocacy Coordinator
Maine Women's Lobby

¹ Vote Mamas Foundation, 2025 "Campaign Funds for Childcare by State" Retrieved via <https://www.votemamafoundation.org/cfccstates>

² Pew Research Center, 2023 "In a Growing Share of U.S. Marriages, Husbands and Wives Earn About the Same" Retrieved via <https://www.pewresearch.org/social-trends/2023/04/13/in-a-growing-share-of-u-s-marriages-husbands-and-wives-earn-about-the-same/>; Vote Mamas Foundation, 2024 "Campaign Funds for Childcare" Retrieved via https://www.votemamafoundation.org/_files/ugd/8c99c1_20910ab97adf41b48229e253f1327caf.pdf

³ Vote Mamas Foundation, 2024 "Politics of Parenthood: Representation in State Legislatures 2024" Retrieved via <https://www.votemamafoundation.org/reports/popreport2024>