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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

Neither nor for against LD 431, *An Act Regarding Driver's Licenses for Individuals in Foster Care*

Sponsor: Representative Roeder  
Hearing Date: March 12, 2025

Senator Ingwersen, 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 Maine Department of Health and Human Services. I am here today to testify neither for nor against LD 431, *An Act Regarding Driver's Licenses for Individuals in Foster Care*.

This bill is intended to support youth in foster care or formerly in foster care in obtaining their driver's license. It would require that OCFS establish a program to pay for or reimburse all costs associated with obtaining a driver's license (including insurance and other costs). It would also require OCFS to establish a program to ensure all youth age 15 or older have the opportunity to obtain both driver's education and the required driving hours under their learner's permit. The bill would require motor vehicle dealers to allow minors who are at least 15 ½ years of age to contract for the purchase of a motor vehicle and establishment of an automobile insurance policy. The bill would require the Secretary of State to waive fees associated with obtaining a Class C driver's license for youth under the age of 27 who are in the Department's care or were formerly in care prior to reaching adulthood. Lastly, the bill would expand the array of individuals who can sign in support of a youth who is seeking a driver's license and certify their permit driving hours.

OCFS strongly supports additional efforts to ensure youth in care and formerly in care can access the skills and tools necessary to be able to drive. OCFS already pays for the cost of driver's education, driving hours, and other associated costs for youth in care and young adults engaged in the Voluntary Extended Care Program. This bill would mark an expansion of that support as it would include youth who may no longer be eligible for the Voluntary Extended Care Program due to age but are involved with the Alumni Transition Grant Program (ATGP). Notably, OCFS does not currently pay for motor vehicle insurance for these youth as required under this bill, which is the primary source of the significant fiscal estimate on this bill.

OCFS does believe that this legislation could be beneficial in ensuring access to a driver's license by expanding the list of adults who may sign the youth's driver's license application and clarifying that one who signs is not liable as a result of signing. OCFS believes it would be

helpful to extend this limitation on liability to those who supervise a youth's driving hours as well.

OCFS is unable to speak to the legality and logistics of changes to the law that would allow youth to contract for the purchase of a vehicle and insurance. In OCFS' experience the inability to obtain an insurance policy is one of the biggest barriers youth face in the process of becoming drivers.

OCFS recognizes the complexity and issues associated with youth in care or formerly in care obtaining a driver's license and we are working to address barriers primarily through one-on-one work between youth in care or those on a Voluntary Extended Care Agreement and their caseworker. We remain committed to helping these youth address systemic and financial barriers in every way possible.

OCFS appreciates the opportunity to provide this information related to LD 431.

Thank you for your time and attention. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have and to make myself available for questions at the work session.