

Good afternoon, Senator Ingwersen, Representative Meyer, and esteemed members of the Health and Human Services Committee. Thank you for hearing from me today. I'm here in support of LD 541, *An Act to Promote Awareness of the Maine Parentage Act*. My goal is to ensure this bill produces a brochure that empowers fathers with the knowledge to choose paternity testing, which should be a man's first decision to establish his family and protect his child.

A child's first asset is their biological father. Many men do not know their rights under the Maine Parentage Act, Title 19-A, Chapter 61. Section 1835, allows genetic testing, voluntary or court-ordered. It states that the court 'shall' require it if requested. Section 1836 does permit acknowledgment, but testing offers certain proof. Section 1834's presumptions don't bar this choice. The brochure will deliver this knowledge to fathers at hospitals and clinics where the child is born.

A paternity test is a simple cheek swab, and provides results in weeks, securing a child's support, inheritance, and certified lineage. Studies, like those from the American Association of Blood Banks, show about 30% of paternity tests exclude the tested man as the father. That's nearly one in three cases where assumptions fail. This is proof that testing matters. It also shields against paternity fraud, which is a brutal crime devastating men financially and emotionally, severing family ties, and robbing children of their true lineage.

When the biological father isn't there to act for his child, that child faces a serious disadvantage. Fathers and men, provide and protect. The biological father is the first and best for that role. If he is absent, the State is often called upon to step in and fill the gap, and bear the cost. The Maine State government has a clear stake in identifying the father as soon as possible. Testing at birth serves this need, to reduce future burdens on the State.

This brochure should guide fathers: to request testing at the hospital, choose a trusted provider, and understand the critical importance of legal clarity, financial security, and peace of mind. By creating this brochure, LD 541 will motivate fathers to act under existing law, to establish proof of his child's lineage. I urge you to pass this bill, and to encourage paternity testing in Maine for all children at birth. Every father should know his children are his, and every child should know exactly who their father is.

Thank you—I welcome your questions.

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