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## *Testimony of Rep. Lydia Crafts presenting*

### **LD 1397, An Act to Fund Community-based Organizations to Prevent and Reduce the Risk of Children's Involvement in the Child Welfare System *Before the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services***

Good morning, Senator Ingwersen, Representative Meyer and members of the Health and Human Services Committee. My name is Lydia Crafts and I represent House District 46, which includes Bristol, Damariscotta, Monhegan Plantation, Newcastle and Nobleboro. Today, I am pleased to present **LD 1397, An Act to Fund Community-based Organizations to Prevent and Reduce the Risk of Children's Involvement in the Child Welfare System.**

As a community-based social worker, I have long known how inadequate and siloed our support systems are for families in Maine. A child's needs are often addressed independently of their parents/guardians, leaving a family accessing separate and disjointed programs. A child may receive Head Start services, but the family may not have reliable transportation to drop off the child. Parents may seek job training, but it may not be scheduled within available childcare. The barriers are numerous. When I first read about 'whole family' or '2Gen' programs, it seemed both obvious and remarkable. Using effective upstream prevention, could Maine address child health and safety by supporting the entire family simultaneously rather than targeting one problem at a time?

The "two-generation approach" was first coined by the Foundation for Child Development in the late 1980s and aimed to connect two critical sets of services: (1) employment and training help for parents and (2) developmental support for children, like high-quality child care and preventive health care. Following the economic downturn of 2009, national leaders sought to support the economic mobility of families while increasing the efficiency and effectiveness of public resources. Thus, there was renewed interest in the 2Gen model, and communities across the country have since benefited from access to this model. Here in Maine, 2Gen pilots funded by the John T. Gorman Foundation have had fantastic results in Aroostook, Washington, Penobscot, Kennebec, and Cumberland counties.

The programs are designed with the following goals:

1. Expand parents' ability to work by helping them develop new skills and clearing common obstacles on career pathways.
2. Ensure the healthy development of children by bringing a two-generation lens to childcare, early education, and support for school-age children.
3. Change how the government works to help families more efficiently and comprehensively access the resources available to them.
4. Increase the value of public investments by leveraging outside resources and incentivizing best practices.

The bill before you today is an effort to help our state build on and expand the work of the Department, community organizations, and CAP agencies to strengthen primary prevention supports. I recognize the concerns you'll hear from the Department and am working in collaboration with stakeholders and the Department to identify solutions to the statutory location of this bill, the funding source, and the total necessary funding. I appreciate this committee's support for and willingness to invest in measures to increase child safety and well-being, for we know that children do well when families do well.

Thank you for your consideration and I am happy to answer any questions