

An Act to Clarify Parental Notifications Regarding Child Care Facility Investigations

Senator Ingwersen, Representative Myer, and honorable members of the joint standing committee on health and human services members. My name is Stephanie Whitman, I am originally from Machias and currently reside in Falmouth and I am the constituent whose personal experience led to the introduction of this bill. In August 2024, my two-year-old daughter was enrolled in a daycare where, without any parental consent, the owner administered melatonin to children at naptime.

It was only through the courage of an employee—who reported this violation—and the actions of another parent, who had access to an email list of enrolled families, that I learned what had happened. I was new to the daycare, had not exchanged contact information with any other parents, and would likely still be unaware and my child still enrolled if not for that shared communication.

This bill represents an early and critical step forward—though not the full extent of what I hope to see in the future—in ensuring transparency and safety in childcare settings. During this incident, I learned that two parents received official DHHS letters indicating their children were victims of mild to moderate child abuse. Yet other families, like mine, received no notice of this—no communication at all—about what had occurred or the seriousness of the situation.

One of the most pressing realities I want you to understand is this: the systems of justice, investigation, and appeals move far too slowly to keep children safe in real time. In my case, the incident was reported on August 20, 2024, and as of today, the facility remains open, advertising and caring for children as it is under appeal. Not a single detail of this investigation appears publicly on ChildCareChoices.ME, the very site parents are told to use to evaluate providers.

That means that for over seven months, parents currently using or considering that daycare have had no publicly available information warning them of an active abuse investigation. They have no idea what happened or that anything happened at all. That silence puts children at continued risk and deprives families of the ability to make informed choices.

Under current law, a child can be the victim of abuse at the hands of a childcare provider, and no notice is required to be sent to other families whose children remain in that facility. This means that if my child is abused today, and your child is enrolled at the same daycare, you will never know.

I am here today to urge you to support a small but powerful legislative change that will have a direct impact on the health and safety of Maine's youngest and most vulnerable residents.

One crucial part of this bill is the amendment proposed by Senator Pierce, requiring DHHS to be responsible for—or at minimum, copied on—any communication to families when an investigation is underway. Without this safeguard, we are placing the burden of transparency on the very individuals or institutions under investigation. Those responsible for harm would be entrusted with shaping the narrative—or choosing not to disclose it at all—with no oversight.

We cannot ask parents to trust systems that do not prioritize openness and accountability. Families deserve timely, transparent communication when their children's safety may be at risk. And children deserve compassionate, vigilant care—protected by oversight from leaders in this room.

Please support this bill and the vital amendment. Let's ensure that no parent is left in the dark about threats to their child's wellbeing.

Thank you for your time and your leadership. I'd be happy to answer any questions you may have.