



Peggy Rotundo
Senator, District 21

THE MAINE SENATE
132nd Legislature

3 State House Station
Augusta, Maine 04333

Testimony in Support of LD 1842

"An Act to Establish Stepparent Visitation Rights."

Presented to the Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary

May 16, 2025

Good afternoon Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn, and the distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary. My name is Peggy Rotundo, and I have the privilege of representing the City of Lewiston in District 21. I am here today to introduce LD 1842, "An Act to Establish Stepparent Visitation Rights."

On October 25, 2023, Maxx Hathaway was killed in the mass shooting in Lewiston. He left behind, his pregnant wife, Brenda, their daughter, Lilian, and Maxx's 11 year old daughter, Zoey. Maxx and Zoey's biological mother had shared custody of Zoey, who felt very much a part of the loving Hathaway family. She was very close to father, her stepmother, Brenda, and her half-sister, Lilian.

Immediately after the shooting, Zoey's biological mother removed the child from the Hathaway home, creating one more tragic loss for Zoey and for the Hathaway family. For more than 6 months, Zoey was not allowed to speak to anyone, her sister, step mother, grandparents, aunts/uncles, cousins or friends. Brenda, her step mother, was frantic with worry during this time. She had no idea where her step daughter was or how she was. She had no idea if she was getting the emotional support she needed after the trauma she had experienced. She could only hope and pray that she was OK and hoped that Zoey knew that the Hathaway family loved her and was trying desperately to establish contact with her. Brenda filed for De Facto Parental rights, but found she had no standing as a step parent. All of this re-traumatized a family that had experienced one of the most horrific experiences imaginable. Zoey's mother continues to tightly control the small number of people Zoey can speak with and even this communication is erratic.

I started to work with Brenda and her attorney after I heard Brenda's heartbreaking story. The proposed bill you have before you is an attempt to address the problem Brenda faced as she worked to establish contact with Zoey. The bill establishes stepparent visitation rights, which don't now exist in Maine statute. It would give stepparents like Brenda standing for contact.



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I thank you for consideration of the bill. I am happy to answer any questions you might have.