

Greetings

My name is Gary Blair, I am from Lisbon, Maine, and currently a licensed foster care parent for the state of Maine, and have been for approximately 10 years. I come before you in support of LD 555 an Act to Separate the Office Of Child And Family Services Away from the Department Of Health And Human Services. The reason for my decision to support a separation is base on many personal negative experiences with supervision and investigating OCFS personnel that were tied to a out of control bureaucratic entrench culture, that does not leave room for common sense in evaluating almost anything having to do with adult caregivers and foster care children, especially when it comes to human traumas both past and present, to both parties. On one side the priority are for the human base requirement of safety and wellbeing and on the bureaucracy side the priority is for compliance with federal mandates and maintaining grants. My experience has been to see a child under my care be taken to be placed in a environment that satisfies a federal mandate for reunification but to have that same child come back to me later after having been physically assaulted again traumatized by the supposedly new and reunification-qualified family. Common sense is not allowed to be an option in the bureaucracy priority to check the mandate box, thus the safety and wellbeing of the child becomes secondary, regardless of what I say, the bureaucratic culture, that is the operational nature within DHHS is not to be question in any way, because they know better than anybody, and if you do have grave concerns towards their decisions you have the pleasure of being retaliated against by a out of control bureaucracy that does not accept common sense. This is only one of the issues that the OCFS has because of a misplaced priority under a out of control with no transparency allowed, bureaucracy known as DHHS.

I have many other personal experiences to share but 3 minutes are not even close enough to be able to share with you. But I would like to end with this. I hope that this bill to separate is not again tabled, the 2021 Diamond bill to separate and last years Timberlake bill to separate OCFS from DHHS was ultimately not only unfair to the senate legislators who passed both bills in a bipartisan majority, which says quite a lot about the importance of those bills considering the climate of decorum between the parties being as it is, but those bills being tabled was grossly unfair to the people of Maine, so regardless of how you feel about this bill to separate, I ask you to not stand in the way again and allow for a debate and a vote on the floor of the peoples house. This is an election year, and this is a very important issue that needs to be voted on.