



Alliance for Addiction and Mental Health Services, Maine

The unified voice for Maine's community behavioral health providers

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Testimony Neither for Nor Against

An Act to Create a Separate Department of Child and Family Services – LD 555

January 6, 2026

Good afternoon Senator Ingwersen, Representative Meyer, and honorable members of the Committee on Health and Human Services. My name is Adam Bloom-Paicopolos. I am a resident of Wells and am proud to serve as the Executive Director of the Alliance for Addiction and Mental Health Services, Maine (the Alliance). The Alliance is the statewide association representing 34 of Maine's community-based behavioral health agencies who provide mental health and substance use services to over 120,000 children, adults, and families annually. The Alliance advocates for the implementation of sound policies and evidence-based practices that serve to enhance the quality and effectiveness of our behavioral health care system.

On behalf of the Alliance, I am here today to speak in an informational capacity neither for nor against LD 555, "An Act to Create a Separate Department of Child and Family Services."

LD 555 as proposed would establish the creation of a new Department by reorganizing functions already housed and operated within the Maine Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS). Community-based behavioral health providers recognize the importance of strong, coordinated state leadership across child welfare, children's behavioral health, and family services. At the same time, we also recognize that our current system is not doing enough to support Maine children and families, as evidenced by the U.S. Department of Justice's recent lawsuit and subsequent Settlement Agreement with the state on children's behavioral health.

While it is clear that DHHS and the community partners, providers, and families it works with are in dire need of additional resources to meet the needs of our children, reorganizing existing offices and creating additional silos between key systems will likely not help achieve the outcomes we all want to see come to fruition.

Many of our member organizations partner directly with DHHS staff across the Office of Children and Family Services, Office of Behavioral Health, Office of MaineCare Services, as well as the juvenile justice and education systems to support children with complex behavioral health needs. Any structural change to governance has potential implications for service coordination, effective cross-system communication, and continuity of care.

From the provider perspective, a key consideration for this Committee to consider is how a new Department would interface with the behavioral health system including children's mental health services and substance use disorder treatment. Providers rely on clear lines of authority, consistent policy direction, and coordinated oversight across systems that often serve the same children and families simultaneously. It is essential that we do not add additional layers of complexity and fragmentation to an already fragile system.

Another important consideration is implementation. Structural changes of this scale often take states significant time and resources to execute effectively. During transition periods, providers and families can experience uncertainty related to service availability and oversight, contracting, payment processes, policy interpretation, and points of contact within state government to resolve issues or coordinate transitions between levels of care. Particularly at a time when the state is introducing several new rules and policies in accordance with the DOJ Settlement Agreement that directly impact children's behavioral health services and child welfare programs, siloing off systems may lead to disruptions and delays in the implementation of the very agreement meant to provide relief to children and families and better support providers.

The Alliance recognizes the hard work and partnership with providers that leadership and staff at OCFS and OBH undertake daily to support Maine children and families. We also appreciate this legislation's intent to improve our system of care and stand ready to serve as a resource as you consider this and other bills that address our child welfare and behavioral health systems.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony this afternoon. I would be happy to answer any questions from the Committee.

Respectfully,



Adam Bloom-Paicopolos, MPP
Executive Director