

**Dube, Sophie**

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**From:** Colleen Brown <207puffinpines@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, December 30, 2025 2:18 PM  
**To:** Ingwersen, Henry; Meyer, Michele; Faulkingham, William  
**Cc:** Moore, Marianne; Cmte HHS  
**Subject:** Support for LD 555 – Child Welfare Needs a Standalone Department

**This message originates from outside the Maine Legislature.**

Dear Senators and Representatives,

I am writing in strong support of SP 217, LD 555, which would create a separate Department of Child and Family Services.

I cannot attend the public hearing, but I want my support clearly and formally on record.

The current structure within DHHS has failed to protect children, including in cases where DHS had repeated involvement and significant warning signs were known. When child welfare is embedded within an agency with dozens of competing missions, accountability is diluted, risk is minimized, and cases are too easily closed rather than escalated.

Recent child deaths in Maine are not isolated tragedies. They are symptoms of a system that lacks clear ownership, consistent escalation thresholds, and leadership singularly focused on child safety.

We should say their names.

Children in this state have died after DHS involvement.

Some after multiple reports.

Some after cases were opened and closed with “no concerns.”

Some after the system had already permanently removed other children from the same family.

In several of these cases, names were released publicly. In others, they were not. But anonymity does not lessen responsibility.

Every unnamed child matters just as much as every named one.

At what point does repeated DHS involvement stop being “insufficient information” and start being institutional negligence?

How many reports are enough?

How many closed cases are enough?

How many dead children are enough?

This bill is not about expansion. It is about focus, transparency, and accountability. A standalone Department of Child and Family Services makes it unmistakably clear who is responsible when children are harmed and who must answer when the system fails.

Children deserve a system designed around their safety, not administrative convenience or institutional self-protection.

**When a system touches a family repeatedly and a child still dies, that is not a tragedy. It is a failure of governance.**

I strongly urge you to support LD 555 and to treat this legislation with the urgency that recent events demand.

Thank you for your work on behalf of Maine's children.

Sincerely,

Colleen Brown, M.Ed.

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