

Dube, Sophie

From: Colleen Brown <207puffinpines@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, December 30, 2025 4:02 PM
To: Ingwersen, Henry; Meyer, Michele
Cc: Dube, Sophie; Moore, Marianne
Subject: An Act to Clarify the Laws Governing Facilities for Children and Adults Under the Health and Human Services Laws

This message originates from outside the Maine Legislature.

Dear Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services

Thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony regarding LD 2001.

Although this bill is framed as technical clarification, it makes substantive changes that concern me deeply. As written, LD 2001 centralizes authority within DHHS, reduces external oversight, limits transparency, and weakens routine inspection requirements. Taken together, these changes increase risk to children rather than improving safety or accountability.

I want to be clear that I support protecting personal privacy in abuse and neglect cases. However, process failures and decision-making rationale are not private information. They are government actions. When children are seriously harmed or die, the public and Legislature must be able to understand what decisions were made, why they were made, and where systems failed. Transparency does not require disclosure of identities. It requires disclosure of system performance. Without that, accountability is impossible.

I am also concerned about consolidating licensing and investigative functions within DHHS. Centralizing licensing, enforcement, investigations, and rulemaking under one agency increases the risk that DHHS is effectively investigating itself. DHHS is already stretched thin, and consolidation without significant staffing investment increases burnout and turnover, which directly undermines safety and consistency.

The removal of routine inspections for family foster homes and specialized children's homes is particularly troubling. These homes serve high-risk children, and conditions can and do change over time. Routine inspections are not punitive. They are preventative. Eliminating them assumes safety remains static after placement, which is not realistic and puts children at risk.

I also oppose eliminating interagency licensing. Redundancy in child safety systems is not waste; it is protection. Shared oversight provides checks and balances that prevent blind spots and ensure accountability when systems fail.

I am not suggesting that DHHS be removed from child welfare, foster care, or abuse and neglect investigations. I am suggesting that licensing authority for day care and early childhood programs and centers be transferred to the Department of Education. Day care programs are early childhood education settings governed by developmental expectations, programming standards, and school readiness outcomes. Licensing these programs through DOE would better align oversight with educational programming, support implementation of LD 345, and allow DHHS to focus its limited capacity on higher-risk child welfare functions. DHHS would retain authority over health, safety, and abuse response, with mandatory cross-reporting between agencies.

While the communicable disease clearance requirement for nursery school staff is reasonable, it does not offset the broader concerns outlined above.

For these reasons, I oppose LD 2001 as written and urge the Committee to reject provisions that reduce transparency, eliminate routine inspections, and remove interagency oversight. Children need visible systems, shared accountability, and public trust — not streamlined bureaucracy.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully,

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