



## CHILD WELFARE OMBUDSMAN

March 29, 2021

Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety  
c/o Legislative Information Office  
100 State House Station  
Augusta, ME 04333

RE: LD 58—An Act to Improve Information Sharing by Criminal Justice Agencies with Government Agencies Responsibly for Investigating Child or Adult Abuse

Dear Senator Deschambault, Representative Warren, and Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety:

I am writing in support of LD 58 that would amend 16 MRSA §806 to increase the ability of law enforcement to share information with child protective workers investigating complaints of child abuse or neglect. One crucial decision-making point in child protective involvement is the initial investigation. Child protective workers must respond quickly to new reports of abuse or neglect and sometimes with very little time make a decision about whether or not the child is safe to remain in the home.

Often parents or caregivers have criminal histories or are currently being investigated by law enforcement. These investigations and histories generate records and information that are not fully accessible by child protective workers under current law. Currently child protective services can only access records in criminal investigations that involve the reported child abuse or neglect. There are many criminal investigations that involve facts that are highly relevant to the parent or caregiver's ability to safely care for a child that do not directly involve a child.

This proposed legislation would enhance the safety of children involved in child protective investigations, as well as in open child welfare cases.

Thank you for your consideration, and I would be happy to answer any questions that you have.

Respectfully,

Christine Alberi

Child Welfare Ombudsman