

OFFICE OF POLICY AND LEGAL ANALYSIS

Date: March 25, 2021
To: Joint Standing Committee on Health & Human Services
From: Erin Dooling, Esq., Legislative Analyst

LD 699 An Act To Create a Kinship Care Navigator Program within the Department of Health and Human Services

SUMMARY: This bill establishes within DHHS the kinship care navigator program to provide resources and information to persons providing kinship care to children in the State. Kinship care is defined to mean the care of a child on a temporary or permanent basis by a person who is not the child's parent but who is either a relative or a person who has a close relationship with the child, whether or not DHHS was involved in placing the child with the person.

It requires the Commissioner of DHHS to designate one person to administer the program. The program may:

- Identify and coordinate existing resources available to persons providing kinship care
- Develop collaborative working relationships with state agencies, social services agencies and other organizations providing services to kinship care families; and
- Provide referrals to available resources and information about obtaining services from DHHS

DRAFTING NOTES:

- *Line 8:* Does the term "relative" need a definition? If so, is the existing definition in [22 M.R.S.A. § 4002\(9-B\)](#) for the Child and Family Services and Child Protection Act sufficient?

9-B. Relative. "Relative" means a family member related to the child within the 3rd degree through parentage established under [Title 19-A, chapter 61](#) or any spouse of that family member. "Relative" also includes the adoptive parent of the child's siblings. "Relative" includes, for an Indian child as defined by the Indian Child Welfare Act of 1978, 25 United States Code, [Section 1903, Subsection 4](#), an extended family member as defined by the law or custom of the Indian child's tribe or, in the absence of such law or custom, an extended family member as defined by the Indian Child Welfare Act of 1978, 25 United States Code, [Section 1903, Subsection 2](#).

PROPOSED AMENDMENTS FROM TESTIMONY:

- *Jessica Gleason:* House the program outside of DHHS

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION REQUESTED BY COMMITTEE:

- Provide the kinship advisory board report referenced in testimony. (*Attached*)
- *Submitted to DHHS:*
 - From the Department's perspective on whether the current contract is outside the Department, what would this bill look like if it's not already happening?
 - Please provide the information Dr. Landry presented at the public hearing on kinship placements since 2008.
 - Does the Department think this bill could assist the Department in providing support to family members?

FISCAL IMPACT: Not yet determined.