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Senator Ned Claxton, Chair

Representative Michele Meyer, Chair

Joint Standing Committee on Health & Human Services, Maine State Legislature

100 State House Station

Augusta, ME 04333

Dear Senator Claxton and Representative Meyer, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on the Health & Human Services Committee, My name is Lauren Evans, I am writing to you today in support of LD699, An Act To Create a Kinship Care Navigator Program within the Department of Health and Human Services.

I write to you in support of this act from my personal experience and the hardships that were presented through the process of the adoption of my, now 11-year-old son, Chance. In 2014, I obtained guardianship through probate court of Chance. Shortly after I was awarded guardianship, DHHS had obtained custody of three of Chance's younger half siblings and two older half-siblings. While the details were not allowed to be shared with me, my experience was that if I was unable to provide information to the case manager regarding their open case that DHHS could be of no help to me with the kinship placement.

I pursued a private adoption to ensure that Chance's placement in my home and life would be permanent and he would not be subjected to further turmoil. I did this on my own volition. While our family was

fortunate to have had the wherewithal to navigate these challenging waters they did not come without sacrifice. I paused my education, further endowed myself to my career to make ends meet and struggled to ensure we could stay afloat. Two years later, Chance's adoption was final.

Due to this experience, I am an advocate for a navigator of Kinship Care Program as I believe would help guide individuals who are in situations similar to our family.

Thank you for the opportunity to share my experience with you today.