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Testimony of Todd A. Landry, Ed.D., Director
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Before the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services
In Opposition to LD 1173 – Resolve, To Develop a Plan To Treat in Maine Those Children with
Behavioral Health Needs Currently Treated Outside the State

Hearing Date: April 7, 2021

Good Morning Senator Claxton, Representative Meyer, and Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services:

I am Todd Landry, Director of the Office of Child and Family Services (OCFS) within the Department of Health and Human Services and I am here today to testify in opposition to LD 1173, Resolve, To Develop a Plan To Treat in Maine Those Children with Behavioral Health Needs Currently Treated Outside the State. This bill requires the Department to create and submit a plan to this Committee within 30 days of the legislation going into effect. The plan would address the Department's efforts to coordinate with families of children who are receiving residential treatment for behavioral and mental health issues outside of the state.

Our opposition to this bill is quite simple. OCFS' Children's Behavioral Health Services (CBHS) division is already hard at work implementing a comprehensive plan to improve behavioral and mental health services available to all Maine children. In December of 2020 we published our annual report on our implementation progress related to this comprehensive plan, including several that we believe will ultimately have a direct impact the factors that lead a child to receiving treatment outside of Maine. Examples include development of a Psychiatric Residential Treatment Facility (PRTF) in Maine (given that many children who are currently being served out-of-state are placed in PRTFs and that level of care does not currently exist in Maine) and efforts to complete a rate study and updated MaineCare policy for children's PNMI services and implement a higher quality of care and a MaineCare rate that reflects the cost of providing quality residential treatment.

The development and writing of the plan envisioned by LD 1173 would take time away from the system improvement efforts already underway. OCFS shares the goal of ensuring that children are able to receive the services they need in our state, and ideally within their communities, and that goal is reflected in the work that has been and will continue to be implemented in the system improvement plan. OCFS does not believe that taking time away from implementation efforts to create an additional (and duplicative) plan for system improvement and a corresponding report on that plan would benefit Maine children or families.

I urge you to vote ought not to pass on LD 1173 and thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today. I'm happy to answer any questions you may have.