



Volunteers of America®

NORTHERN
NEW ENGLAND

February 21, 2022

Senator Ned Claxton
Representative Michele Meyer
Committee on Health and Human Services
Maine State Legislature
c/o Legislative Information Office
100 State House Station
Augusta, ME 04333

RE: Testimony in support of LD 393

Dear Senator Claxton, Representative Meyer, and Honorable Members of the Committee on Health and Human Services:

My name is Richard A. Hooks Wayman, and I am a resident of Maine and serve as the President & CEO for Volunteers of America Northern New England which is headquartered in Brunswick. I write in support of LD 393 and its proposed investment in a spectrum of family support services and the addition of a Coordinator within DHHS focused on prevention strategies to mitigate child maltreatment.

Volunteers of America (VOA) Northern New England is a faith-based community nonprofit that is a member of the Maine Child Welfare Action Network. I am also a foster-adoptive parent to six children. A robust child welfare system requires targeted investments and a multifaceted approach to address the complex causes of child maltreatment and neglect.

LD 393 would offer dedicated funding for an array of interventions (Kinship Navigation, HomeBuilders, and Parents as Teachers). I would specifically highlight the bill's proposal to dedicate funding for a full-time Coordinator, embedded in DHHS, that would be responsible for coordinating and improving prevention strategies as they related to child abuse and neglect. While a lot of attention has been placed on the State's Plan to meet the federal expectations under the Family First Prevention Services Act, the state currently lacks a coordinated system of prevention services. Reports assessing our state child welfare system, including those recently completed by the Casey Family Programs, have noted the need to improve collaboration with community nonprofit organizations providing social supports to under-

resources families. Providing a Coordinator that can work with DHHS divisions and other state agencies to design and build on prevention strategies will help to implement best practices.

Additionally, VOA supports the bill's proposed increased investment to an array of family-focused social services. Increased funding is needed to enlarge kinship support capacity through the Adoptive and Foster Families of Main program, a wonderful and well-respected nonprofit organization. Further investments to extend the HomeBuilder program (another evidence-based practice) to families experiencing reunification with their children is also warranted. The HomeBuilder program delivers intense support services for four weeks including access to crisis support, motivational interviewing, parent education, skill building, and cognitive/behavioral therapy interventions through this program for all families. HomeBuilders is a nationally recognized evidence-based practice, and recent research data shows that six months after termination of services, 86% of children have avoided placement in state-funded foster care, group care or psychiatric institutions, and remained safety in their homes.

(http://www.institutefamily.org/programs_ifps.asp)

Finally, the bill's proposal to increase resources to Parents as Teachers (the home visiting model through Maine Families) is a wise investment in Maine families and may create an opportunity to coordinate these services with the Maine CDC Public Health Nurses' home visiting services. The Parent as Teacher program model includes four components: personal home visits, supportive group-connection events, child health and developmental screenings, and community resource networks. These services enhance the Maine CDC Public Health Nurses home visiting program and are an essential component of prevention approaches in our state.

I would ask you to give this bill serious consideration. Thank you for your public service to Maine.

Sincerely,



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