



STATE OF MAINE
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
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AUGUSTA, MAINE
04333-0001

Paul R. LePage
GOVERNOR

23 April 2018

The 128th Legislature of the State of Maine
State House
Augusta, ME

Dear Honorable Members of the 128th Legislature:

Under the authority vested in me by Article IV, Part Third, Section 2 of the Constitution of the State of Maine, I am hereby vetoing LD 1187, "An Act To Amend the Child Protective Services Statutes."

Nothing in my role as Governor is a higher priority than the safety of our children. While I am sure the authors of this bill share my concern for our children's safety, I believe this bill may have serious unintended consequences. The changes in this bill prioritizes kinship placements in a way that may not necessarily be in the best interest of the child.

The Department of Health and Human Services is currently investigating the horrific death of a child who was in a kinship placement. The Department already places a priority on placement with kin and will continue to do so, as long as the placement is believed to be in the best interest of the child. Maine is currently above the national average for kinship placements.

While well-intentioned, this bill prioritizes the rights of relatives over the best interest of a child, as it makes a predetermined judgment that a relative placement out of state or after a long vetting process better serves the child than expeditious placement of a child in a safe and loving home. The State must retain the flexibility to prioritize kinship placements only when it is truly in the best interest of the child.

For these reasons, I return LD 1187 unsigned and vetoed. I strongly urge the Legislature to sustain it.

Sincerely,

Paul R. LePage
Governor



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