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 582, “An Act To Provide for Timely Physical Examinations of Children Entering State Custody.”

While I appreciate the efforts of the Legislature to urge Maine toward the fastest possible health and behavioral assessments for kids being brought into foster care, this proposal is neither possible nor practical. Today, Maine law requires the Department to ensure that a medical appointment is scheduled within 10 days of a child coming into state custody. Ten days is a quick turnaround that still allows for the complexities of a case to be fully considered, as well as for the difficulties of scheduling an appointment in a state that had a shortage of clinicians.

As the Legislature considers the issues highlighted in this bill, it must not lose sight of the broader issue. Tax policy is driving doctors and other high-income earners out of Maine and makes recruitment of new professionals nearly impossible and restricts access to the medical care that Mainers need.

I support and am committed to ensuring that all children who enter state custody have their physical and mental health needs met as quickly as possible, but imposing an arbitrary deadline that cannot be met does not address this. Today, child welfare case mangers work tirelessly to meet the needs of Maine’s foster kids. Additionally the Office of Child and Family Service partners with the Maine Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics and numerous physicians across the state, and it has created a new billable service in MaineCare to cover visits known as Comprehensive Health Assessments specifically to serve our most vulnerable kids.

For these reasons, I return LD 582 unsigned and vetoed. I strongly urge the Legislature to sustain it.

Sincerely,

Paul R. LePage
Governor