



May 20, 2019

Senator Michael Carpenter, Chair  
Representative Donna Bailey, Chair  
Committee on Judiciary  
100 State House Station  
Augusta, ME 04333

**RE: LD 1684 "An Act To Clarify the Right to Counsel for Juveniles and Improve Due Process for Juveniles"**

Dear Judiciary Committee;

My name is Lynn Stanley and I am the Interim Executive Director for the National Association of Social Workers, Maine Chapter (NASW ME). I am writing to express support for LD 1684 on behalf of NASW ME. Please accept this letter of testimony as I cannot attend the public hearing.

We know on an intuitive level that children who commit statutory or criminal acts need to be treated differently. Brain science backs up this understanding that children do not have the same comprehension of their actions or the results of their actions as adults. Even when the child seems defiant, intentional, or “grown up” for their age, we know their brains have not developed to the point of fully integrating their experience with its impact on society.

Enacting a law that sets minimum ages of juvenile justice jurisdiction and incarceration aligns what we know about the brain development of children and best practice. Research has shown higher recidivism rates for incarcerated youth and overall poorer outcomes over time.

The primary mission of the social work profession is to enhance human well-being and help meet the basic human needs of all people, with particular attention to the needs and empowerment of people who are vulnerable, oppressed, and living in poverty. It is imperative that our most vulnerable Maine citizens, our children, have access to supportive, therapeutic services while remaining in their family’s care and integrated within their communities. Our children deserve to have representation and protection.

Thank you for the opportunity to voice our support.

Respectfully submitted,

Lynn Stanley, LICSW  
Interim Executive Director – Maine Chapter  
National Association of Social Workers

[lstanley.naswme@socialworkers.org](mailto:lstanley.naswme@socialworkers.org)  
603.496.0994