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MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE
GOVERNMENT OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE

April 24, 2023

Jeanne M. Lambrew, Ph.D.
Commissioner
Maine Department of Health and Human Services
11 State House Station
Augusta, Maine 04333-0011

Dear Commissioner Lambrew,

At the Friday, April 14, 2023, meeting of the Government Oversight Committee, we heard concerns, shared by Senator Mike Tipping, with additional perspectives added by Senator Jeff Timberlake, about apparent ongoing and exceptionally long customer waiting times (“on hold”), when Maine citizens seek to communicate with the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) by telephone regarding critical and much needed services. In connection with the Committee’s further review and consideration of appropriate action in this matter, we request that you respond to the following questions in writing, at your earliest convenience, and no later than the next scheduled meeting of the Committee on April 28, 2023:

1. What is your best available data or understandings about how long current customer wait times may be at present, when calling DHHS for assistance?
2. How are you measuring any such wait times?
3. How have customer call wait times changed, if at all, since April 2019?
4. Please provide any available data on how many callers have encountered a “no one is available to take your call”-type message, or otherwise “given up” and ended the call.
5. What, if any, DHHS performance metrics or standards govern the acceptable call waiting times for customers seeking any or all types of agency assistance, and are there any differing service levels offered for urgent or emergency matters?
6. Please describe when, if at all, these concerns were first identified by DHHS itself, in 2023, or 2022, or earlier, and what if any actions are planned or underway to address them?

7. To the extent these concerns have been known to DHHS, what if any factors has DHHS identified to date as to potential causation?
8. Are there service areas or topics that are experiencing higher call volumes than others, and if so, please identify them?
9. To what extent are calls fielded by remote workers, including agency employees or contractors working from home?
10. To what extent, if at all, has remote work been identified as a factor in call response time efficacy?
11. Has the staffing or work location(s) of call response workers changed at all since April 2019, and if so, please describe any such changes.
12. To the extent not already addressed in response to 2., has the call volume changed since April 2019, and if so, how?
13. What measures (e.g., training, staffing, monitoring, statistical summaries of metrics, other quality assurance) are in place to ensure that agency employees or contractors are performing their call response obligations timely, and consistent with best practices for customer service?

Thank you for your timely attention and response to these matters.

Very truly yours,



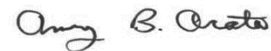
Craig V. Hickman
Senate Chair



Lisa Keim
Senate Lead



Jessica L. Fay
House Chair



Amy Arata
House Lead

cc: Members, Government Oversight Committee