



## MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE

AUGUSTA, MAINE 04333-0003

June 16, 2026

Senator Craig Hickman, Chair  
Representative Anne-Marie Mastraccio, Chair  
Government Oversight Committee  
c/o Office of Program Evaluation and Government Accountability  
82 State House Station  
Augusta, ME 04333-0082

Dear Senator Hickman, Representative Mastraccio, and members of the Government Oversight Committee,

I respectfully request that we, the Government Oversight Committee (GOC), direct the Office of Program Evaluation and Government Accountability (OPEGA) to obtain from the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) the disclosure required under [Title 22, §4008-A: Child abuse and neglect investigations; disclosure](#) (see in particular, 1-A) detailing DHHS's interactions, if any, with the family of Braxton Smith, the 10-year-old child in Bangor whose mother, father and grandmother have all pled guilty in connection with his tortuous death.

You may recall in the prior child death cases OPEGA reviewed for GOC that DHHS releases such a disclosure with this type of information once the judicial process has been completed. With the guilty plea of Braxton's grandmother on Friday, that disposition is now complete for all three defendants.

As I previously mentioned to the Committee, more children with OCFS involvement have [died in the last five years](#) (154 in total) than in the previous 14 years combined since tracking began. In fact, a recent update to the child fatality dashboard indicates that DHHS's Office of Child and Family Services (OCFS) recorded its highest year in child deaths in 2024 when 38 children who had OCFS involvement died that year – that figure was revised from 31 – and another 24 children died last year. Of course, last year's figure is likely to be revised in the future as well.

I'm not requesting a formal investigation at this time, although that may change if the information in the DHHS disclosure warrants it. As it stands now, and considering the mother was a DHHS employee, it's time we got some answers about this case.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads 'Jeff Timberlake'.

Jeff Timberlake  
State Senator, District 17

Cc: Members, Government Oversight Committee  
Peter Schleck, Director, Office of Program Evaluation and Government Accountability  
Members, Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services