

adoptioninstitute

January 28, 2013

The Honorable Paul LePage
Office of the Governor
#1 State House Station
Augusta, ME 04333-0001

Dear Governor LePage:

The Donaldson Adoption Institute is an independent, nonpartisan, nonprofit research, policy and education think tank. We conduct research and analysis in order to improve adoption-related laws, policies and practices. This correspondence regarding the proposed \$1.4 million cut in adoption subsidies explains why halving subsidies for 900 Maine families who have adopted children from foster care would be harmful to them and could deter prospective adoptive families from pursuing adoption of children from care.

The Adoption Institute – in partnership with the North American Council on Adoptable Children – recently published an Issue Brief illustrating that state funding for adoption subsidies is an essential tool for enabling children and youth to move from foster care into permanent, loving, successful families (a copy is attached and is also available at <http://bit.ly/SHHHOW>). As the Issue Brief demonstrates:

- Subsidies reduce financial barriers for families adopting children from foster care: Adoption assistance helps families – the vast majority of whom are foster parents or relatives and who have very low incomes – meet the basic needs of children they adopt from the child welfare system. Many parents report they could not have afforded to adopt without a subsidy.
- Subsidies increase adoptions from the child welfare system: According to economic analyses, subsidies “have a positive and statistically significant effect on adoption rates” and “subsidy policy is the most important determinant of adoptions from foster care that is under the direct control of policymakers.” A federal evaluation found that “adoption subsidies are perhaps the single most powerful tool by which the child welfare system can encourage adoption and support adoptive families.”
- Adoption and subsidies are cost-effective: Adoption yields cost savings versus foster care; one economist found that every dollar invested in adoption of a child from care returns about three dollars in public and private benefits.

It is important to point out that the proposed cut would affect families that already have adoption assistance agreements with Maine, and that courts in other states (e.g., Missouri in 2006, *E.C. v. Blunt*) have halted cuts in part on the grounds that they impact existing agreements.

I hope this information is useful, and I hope you’ll agree that preserving adoption subsidies is in the best interests of children, families and the state of Maine. Please feel free to contact me at apertman@adoptioninstitute.org or 617-332-8944 if you have questions. Thank you for your attention and your important work.

Sincerely,



Adam Pertman
Executive Director