

MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE

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132nd MAINE LEGISLATURE

FIRST SPECIAL SESSION-2025

Legislative Document

No. 1618

H.P. 1072

House of Representatives, April 15, 2025

**Resolve, to Study the Feasibility of Establishing a Dedicated Family
Court in Maine**

(EMERGENCY)

Received by the Clerk of the House on April 11, 2025. Referred to the Committee on
Judiciary pursuant to Joint Rule 308.2 and ordered printed pursuant to Joint Rule 401.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Robert B. Hunt".

ROBERT B. HUNT
Clerk

Presented by Representative GRAMLICH of Old Orchard Beach.
Cosponsored by Senator BAILEY of York and
Representatives: CARUSO of Caratunk, HENDERSON of Rumford, KUHN of Falmouth,
LEE of Auburn, MOONEN of Portland, O'HALLORAN of Brewer, PUGH of Portland,
Senator: HAGGAN of Penobscot.

1 **Emergency preamble. Whereas,** acts and resolves of the Legislature do not
2 become effective until 90 days after adjournment unless enacted as emergencies; and

3 **Whereas,** the study in this resolve must be initiated before the 90-day period expires
4 in order that the study may be completed and a report submitted in time for submission to
5 the next legislative session; and

6 **Whereas,** in the judgment of the Legislature, these facts create an emergency within
7 the meaning of the Constitution of Maine and require the following legislation as
8 immediately necessary for the preservation of the public peace, health and safety; now,
9 therefore, be it

10 **Sec. 1. Study group established. Resolved:** That the Study Group to Research
11 the Feasibility of Establishing a Dedicated Family Court in Maine, referred to in this
12 resolve as "the study group," is established.

13 **Sec. 2. Study group membership. Resolved:** That, notwithstanding Joint Rule
14 353, the study group consists of 12 members appointed as follows:

- 15 1. Two members of the Senate, appointed by the President of the Senate;
- 16 2. Two members of the House of Representatives, appointed by the Speaker of the
17 House;
- 18 3. One member representing the judicial branch who is a judge selected by the Chief
19 Justice of the Supreme Judicial Court, appointed by the President of the Senate;
- 20 4. One member representing the judicial branch who is a family process manager
21 selected by the Chief Justice of the Supreme Judicial Court, appointed by the Speaker of
22 the House;
- 23 5. One member representing a child welfare advocacy organization, appointed by the
24 President of the Senate;
- 25 6. One member who is a guardian ad litem, appointed by the President of the Senate;
- 26 7. One member representing the Family Law Advisory Commission under the Maine
27 Revised Statutes, Title 19-A, chapter 5, appointed by the Speaker of the House;
- 28 8. One member representing a domestic violence prevention and survivor support
29 organization, appointed by the Speaker of the House;
- 30 9. One member who is an individual with personal experience with family law
31 proceedings in court, appointed by the President of the Senate; and
- 32 10. One member who is an individual with personal experience with family law
33 proceedings in court, appointed by the Speaker of the House.

34 **Sec. 3. Chairs. Resolved:** That the first-named Senate member is the Senate chair
35 and the first-named House of Representatives member is the House chair of the study
36 group.

37 **Sec. 4. Appointments; convening of study group. Resolved:** That all
38 appointments must be made no later than 30 days following the effective date of this
39 resolve. The appointing authorities shall notify the Executive Director of the Legislative
40 Council once all appointments have been completed. After appointment of all members,

1 the chairs shall call and convene the first meeting of the study group. If 30 days or more
2 after the effective date of this resolve a majority of but not all appointments have been
3 made, the chairs may request authority and the Legislative Council may grant authority for
4 the study group to meet and conduct its business.

5 **Sec. 5. Duties. Resolved:** That the study group shall undertake a comprehensive
6 study to evaluate the feasibility, potential benefits and challenges associated with
7 establishing a dedicated family court system. The comprehensive study must include an
8 examination of:

- 9 1. The volume and types of family law cases currently handled by the State's courts;
- 10 2. The average time to resolution for family law cases under the current system;
- 11 3. The potential for reducing delays and improving outcomes through a dedicated
12 family court;
- 13 4. Best practices from other states with dedicated family courts;
- 14 5. The resources required for a dedicated family court system; and
- 15 6. The number of times an individual case is heard by multiple judges.

16 **Sec. 6. Staff assistance. Resolved:** That the Legislative Council shall provide
17 necessary staffing services to the study group, except that Legislative Council staff support
18 is not authorized when the Legislature is in regular or special session.

19 **Sec. 7. Report. Resolved:** That, no later than December 3, 2025, the study group
20 shall submit a report that includes its findings and recommendations, including suggested
21 legislation, for presentation to the Second Regular Session of the 132nd Legislature.

22 **Emergency clause.** In view of the emergency cited in the preamble, this legislation
23 takes effect when approved.

24 SUMMARY

25 This resolve establishes the Study Group to Research the Feasibility of Establishing a
26 Dedicated Family Court in Maine to undertake a comprehensive study to evaluate the
27 feasibility, potential benefits and challenges associated with establishing a dedicated family
28 court system.