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## **An Act To Expand Options in the Permanency Plan for Children in Foster Care**

**Be it enacted by the People of the State of Maine as follows:**

**Sec. 1. 22 MRSA §4038-B, sub-§4, ¶D** is enacted to read:

D. The permanency plan must ensure that all in-state and out-of-state placements are considered to provide children with all possible permanency options.

**Sec. 2. 22 MRSA §4038-B, sub-§5**, as enacted by PL 2005, c. 372, §6, is amended to read:

**5. Wishes of child.** ~~The District Court shall consider, but is not bound by, the wishes of a child in making a determination under this section~~ensure that the child participates in the permanency hearing, in an age-appropriate manner, if the child so desires. In addition, the District Court shall consult with the child, in a manner appropriate to the age of the child, regarding the proposed permanency or transition plan for the child. The District Court is not bound by the wishes of the child in making a permanency determination under this section.

### **SUMMARY**

This bill adopts federal law requirements to clarify that all in-state and out-of-state placements must be considered to provide a child with all possible permanency options and that the rights of the child must be respected through providing accommodations that will allow the child to state the child's wishes directly to the court.