



SEN. CRAIG V. HICKMAN, SENATE CHAIR  
REP. ANNE-MARIE MASTRACCIO, HOUSE CHAIR

MEMBERS:

SEN. MIKE TIPPING  
SEN. JILL C. DUSON  
SEN. JEFF TIMBERLAKE  
SEN. RICK BENNETT  
SEN. BRADLEE T. FARRIN  
REP. ANN HIGGINS MATLACK  
REP. ADAM R. LEE  
REP. MICHAEL H. LEMELIN  
REP. CHAD R. PERKINS  
REP. JOHN M. EDER

MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE  
GOVERNMENT OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE

**MEETING SUMMARY**  
**February 28, 2025**

**Call to Order**

The Chair, Senator Hickman, called the Government Oversight Committee to order at approximately 9:34 a.m.

**ATTENDANCE**

Senators: Senator Hickman, Senator Bennett (attended via zoom), Senator Duson, Senator Farrin, and Senator Timberlake  
Absent: Sen. Tipping

Representatives: Representative Mastraccio, Representative Lee, Representative Lemelin, Representative Matlack, and Representative Perkins  
Absent: Rep. Eder

Legislative Staff: Peter Schleck, Director, OPEGA  
Kari Hojara, Senior Analyst, OPEGA  
Jennifer Greiner, GOC Clerk

**Introduction of Committee Members**

The members of the Committee introduced themselves.

**New Business**

(To watch this meeting - the recorded Live Stream can be viewed here: [February 28, 2025, GOC Meeting](#))

## **Meeting Summary – February 14, 2025**

(A copy of this Meeting Summary can be found here: [February 14, 2025 GOC Meeting Summary](#))

The Committee accepted and approved this meeting summary.

### **Committee Discussion: Riverview and Dorothea Dix Psychiatric Centers**

Sen. Hickman invited OPEGA Director Schleck and OPEGA Senior Analyst Kari Hojara to continue the discussion with the Committee regarding staffing and staff safety at the Riverview and Dorothea Dix Psychiatric Centers, including follow up to a question posed at the last meeting by Sen. Tipping.

Sen. Tipping’s prior question concerned how the information that OPEGA gathered regarding the incidents of staff injuries compared to the reporting by DHHS before the HHS Committee on October 4, 2023. A representation of the chart shared before the HHS Committee may be found here: [DHHS Reported Data of Staff Injuries at Riverview and Dorothea Dix](#)

Director Scheck noted that the information OPEGA gathered, and the information reported to HHS Committee on October 4, 2023 only had one overlapping year, 2022. For 2022, it does appear that there is some difference in the reporting of the numbers as the number reported directly to the HHS Committee was a total of 27 staff injuries at Riverview for 2022 whereas OPEGA’s initial information gathering in December 2024 shows a total of 60 staff injuries for the same facility for 2022. Director Scheck stated that without further work, he was not in a position to explain why the numbers of reported staff injuries for 2022 do not match with the information provided by DHHS to OPEGA.

Director Schleck then shared with the Committee options they could take moving forward, if interested, in further engaging in this matter, which may be found here: [Committee Menu of Options Regarding Riverview and Dorothea Dix](#)

Rep. Mastraccio began the Committee discussion suggesting a Committee visit and tour of Riverview to see the facility firsthand.

Rep. Perkins agreed that a visit to Riverview would be helpful. Rep. Perkins then asked the Director what the difference was between an injury because of an intervention and an injury due to patient behavior.

Director Schleck deferred to Ms. Hojara to answer Rep. Perkins’ question.

Ms. Hojara stated the Department informed OPEGA that a staff injury due to patient behavior is essentially an assault on the staff member, for example a kick, hit, punch or spitting. Ms. Hojara further said the Department stated a staff injury due to patient intervention is a result of when staff need to intervene to keep a patient safe from themselves or to keep other patients safe, for example, during a hands-on hold, during which staff may slip and fall or be accidentally hit during this type of incident.

Rep. Matlack stated she agreed with Rep. Mastraccio and would also like a visit to Riverview.

Rep. Lemelin stated he has been on a tour of Riverview, and that the tour was very beneficial to him to be able to see the facility firsthand and be able to speak with staff one-on-one, which can provide a clearer picture.

Sen. Hickman stated there is a process for an off-site Committee Meeting that requires approval of the Presiding Officers, as well as technically needing to be open to the public. Sen. Hickman stated the Director could inquire if such a tour would be allowed in either facility, and if it is, the chairs would need to schedule this as a future public meeting.

Rep. Lemelin stated that he is not sure if Riverview would be able to handle the whole Committee being at the facility at the same time, stating his past visit was broken up into four or so people at a time for a tour.

Sen. Hickman stated the details would need to be worked out with the facility and perhaps there was a possibility of doing the tour as an Executive Session.

Sen. Hickman then asked Rep. Mastraccio if she was suggesting that no further action be taken on the matter until the Committee is able to have a facility tour.

Rep. Mastraccio stated she would like the Committee to continue the discussion, going through the options the Committee can take on this matter, before making any final decision on whether the Committee is able to schedule a visit at Riverview.

Sen. Hickman then mentioned Sen. Tipping's request from the previous meeting of considering scheduling a hearing or briefing of certain staff members who might want to come before the Committee to discuss situations of staffing, culture and other matters they might want the Committee to be aware of at a future meeting.

Sen. Hickman then asked the Committee Members to share their thoughts and opinions of how they think the Committee should proceed on this matter.

Sen. Hickman asked the Director, regarding the discrepancies of the numbers of staff injuries reported, if OPEGA received the information directly from the facilities or from DHHS.

Director Schleck stated that data from December 2024 was received directly from DHHS.

Sen. Hickman then asked Director Schleck if OPEGA had asked DHHS about the discrepancies of the number of staff injuries for 2022.

Director Schleck stated that OPEGA had not asked anyone about the discrepancies, but acknowledged that would be a question one would have.

Sen. Hickman then addressed the Committee, asking if the Committee would like to invite anyone from DHHS to come before the Committee to answer the questions directly from the Committee at a future meeting.

Sen. Farrin stated he believed the Committee needs a little more time to validate the data presented by OPEGA's information gathering, and then agreed to inviting DHHS to a future meeting to clear up any questions the Committee has. Sen. Farrin stated he does not know if the Committee can decide about future action without having validated the information.

Sen. Hickman summarized the Committee discussion so far, stating the Committee discussed a tour of Riverview as well as a briefing with frontline workers at both facilities. The Committee seemed to be, at the very least, in favor of inviting DHHS representatives to answer any Committee questions raised by the information gathered or otherwise conduct direct follow up as a next step.

### **Motion and Committee Vote**

Sen. Hickman then asked the Committee if they would entertain a motion.

Following Committee discussion, Sen. Farrin made a motion, with a friendly amendment from Sen. Bennett, to direct OPEGA to provide a refresher briefing at the next GOC meeting on the information gathered to date on staffing and staff safety, and to invite representatives of DHHS to answer Committee questions raised by the information immediately thereafter, at the same meeting. The motion was seconded by Rep. Lemelin. The motion was approved unanimously by all Committee Members who voted. (Eight members were present for the vote and two members later voted by absentee vote as allowed by Committee Rules.)

### **Committee Consideration: Legislators' Requests for Review**

Next, Sen. Hickman invited Sen. Timberlake, who was not present yet, Sen. Farrin, and Sen. Bennett to present their request concerning reimbursements for Foster Children in daycare.

Sen. Bennett and Sen. Farrin both preferred to defer until Sen. Timberlake was present.

Sen. Hickman stated the Committee would set this topic aside for now without objection.

### **Director's Report**

Sen. Hickman next invited Director Schleck to report on any other matters.

Director Schleck informed the Committee OPEGA will present the report on select financial operations at Maine Veterans Homes to the Committee on March 28, 2025.

Director Schleck next informed the Committee, with regard to Rep. Perkins' request on the Home Energy Assistance Program, that the Director of the Maine Housing Authority (Director Brennan), and the legislative liaison, Mr. Jorgensen, very much would like to come talk with the Committee regarding this matter, however they are not available to come March 14<sup>th</sup>, but can be available March 28<sup>th</sup>.

Director Schleck next stated that now that the February 14, 2025, Meeting Summary was approved by the Committee without objection, he would work with the Committee Clerk to prepare a letter for the signature of the Chairs. The letter would transmit the Meeting Summary (which included a discussion of the election integrity review request) to the Attorney General and Secretary of State, as voted unanimously by the Committee at the February 14<sup>th</sup> meeting.

Director Schleck's next item to bring before the Committee was a letter from the Health and Human Services Committee to the GOC regarding Child Welfare.

Sen. Hickman read the letter from HHS into the record which may be found here: [Letter from HHS to GOC re Child Welfare](#)

Rep. Mastraccio stated she intended to go to the March 5, 2025, HHS Committee meeting mentioned in the letter from the HHS Committee, during which OCFS Director Bobbi Johnson would present her regular periodic briefing. Rep. Mastraccio stated she attended the last briefing and found it informative. Rep. Mastraccio further stated she would like the Committee to consider inviting Director Johnson and the Child Welfare Ombudsman to come back some time in the future to GOC to provide updates in the future, especially as new legislation progresses.

Sen. Bennett stated he is grateful for the letter from the HHS Committee as they are the right committee to perform oversight of Child Welfare, however due to the gravity of the issues raised by the GOC investigations through OPEGA as well as the Committee's own work, it would be wise for the Committee to observe HHS's work and keep the GOC's oversight function trained on progress at the Department and OCFS. Sen. Bennett further stated he is hopeful that some real reforms can be made with the HHS Committee's support and leadership.

Sen. Duson, in her capacity as Chair of the Blue Ribbon Commission to Study the Organization of and Service Delivery by the Department of Health and Human Services, was scheduled to present the Commission's report to the HHS Committee on Monday March 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2025 at 11:00am. Sen. Duson stated the Blue Ribbon Commission report incorporates, by reference and in detail, the recommendations from the GOC. Sen. Duson also stated that the Blue Ribbon Commission report recommended areas for legislation and understands the HHS Committee will review and consider that. Sen. Duson supports the direction of the GOC, staying informed of updates from DHHS and OCFS, supporting the HHS Committee going forward as it will be more efficient to have one committee to take the lead, but the GOC can be actively involved should new issues arise.

Sen. Hickman suggested an abridged presentation of the Blue Ribbon Commission report to the GOC by Sen. Duson, as he believes it is important for the Committee understand how the work of the Blue Ribbon Commission was done as well as how the recommendations made by that report were decided.

Sen. Hickman added that there comes a time when unless there is a new avenue of evaluation that needs to happen in the Department of Health and Human Services, the Committee does have other work to do. Sen. Hickman added the Committee cannot continue to operate as an inspector general type of committee for some of the detailed and necessary everyday work that has to be done in the Department, especially in the work of Child Protection. Sen. Hickman further stated the Chairs made a conscious decision not to include the orientation of all the work the Committee has done on Child Protection in recent years to the Committee

today, as the chairs felt it would be better to include that orientation when the Committee is ready to vote to endorse, not endorse or endorse in part any or all of the four case file reviews the Committee has worked on over the last two years. Sen. Hickman stated the Committee will need to at some point in this legislative session move to take the votes on the reports so that work can be completed.

With no further comments from Committee members on the letter from the Health and Human Services Committee, Sen. Hickman stated the Committee accepts the letter in good faith and in collaboration with the work of the Health and Human Services Committee on the very crucial work of doing effective oversight of the Office of Child and Family Services in the Department of Health and Human Services.

### **Committee Consideration: Legislators' Requests for Review**

Sen. Hickman next returned to the agenda item of Legislator's Requests for Review and invited Sen. Timberlake, Sen. Farrin, and Sen. Bennett to present their request concerning reimbursements for Foster Children in Daycare.

Sen. Timberlake began the discussion by reading the letter from Sen. Bennett, Sen. Farrin and himself into the record. That letter may be found here: [Letter from Sen. Bennett, Sen. Farrin and Sen. Timberlake RE Delayed DHHS Payments to Daycare Providers](#)

Sen. Timberlake further added that when he read of a \$250,000 fee for a FOAA request, he found it completely out of line and a serious matter. Sen. Timberlake also stated he knew of four Daycares within his own district that are waiting on payments from DHHS and have been waiting for over six months.

Rep. Perkins commented that delayed payments to Daycares for foster children seems systemic as were other examples of delayed payment from DHHS, such as ambulance services and hospitals, and Rep. Perkins added he has personally experienced late payments from the State, delayed six or seven months, for work he had done for the court system in the past. Rep. Perkins stated that systems are supposed to be centralized and efficient, yet it appears there is always a problem of the State paying those who are supposed to be paid and he believes this matter should be looked into by the Committee.

Rep. Perkins stated he sees, as a second issue in the letter from Sen. Bennett, Sen. Farrin and Sen. Timberlake, the response to the FOAA request from DHHS, stating it would take four years and approximately \$250,000 to complete the request being excessive, and can appear as a way for an agency to avoid giving up information. Rep. Perkins stated he believed this matter was also something the Committee should look into.

Sen. Timberlake agreed with Rep. Perkins, stating he is also aware of an issue of timely payments for ambulance services, hospitals and others, but stated day cares are very small businesses that cannot afford to wait for delayed payments. Sen. Timberlake also stated that it is important for the children in foster care to maintain normalcy and stability, including with their daycare provider.

Sen. Bennett stated regarding DHHS and the issue of late payments, it is difficult to know where to begin, and when Sen. Timberlake brought this issue to his attention he was happy to sign the letter because as Rep. Perkins stated, late payments from DHHS to agencies they contract with to provide services is a systematic

problem that needs to be looked into to learn why this is happening. Sen. Bennett added that he understood the State cash pool is around \$1 billion dollars, therefore he believes the problem is not with cash reserves at the State, but there must be a problem with the processing of the payments, which creates significant hardships for providers across the State. Sen. Bennett also stated he believed this was a widespread problem, but beginning with late payments to daycare facilities with foster children was an excellent place to begin, and that by examining one significant area of the problem, perhaps the Committee may learn how to address the broader problem of late payments and whether there is a systematic reform that is required.

Sen. Farrin added to the discussion that he wanted to be on this Committee due to the previous work the Committee has done on the issue of Child Protection. Sen. Farrin stated that individual legislators and specifically this Committee can make a difference. Sen. Farrin further stated that the problem of late payments by the State, mentioning delayed payments to Maine Veterans' Homes which were not made until calls were made to the Chief Executive's office and the Press. Sen. Farrin hopes the Committee will look into this matter and solve the problem of late payments.

Rep. Mastraccio stated she would like to learn more specific details on matters raised in the letter, saying she sees two separate issues in the letter; the response to the FOAA request, and the late payments to daycare providers with foster children. Rep. Mastraccio added that daycare providers submitting invoices by mail, email, fax or in person could be a factor. Rep. Mastraccio stated she supported looking into both of the issues separately. In terms of FOAA, Rep. Mastraccio would like to address both sides of FOAA requests which can be abused. In terms of late payments to daycare providers, Rep. Mastraccio would like to look into detailed specifics of how invoices are submitted and the specifics of how they are paid, stating if she was a daycare or foster parent she would want to know that she would be able to get payments because everyone is operating on a tight budget.

Sen. Timberlake stated that three of the four Daycares that he has knowledge of file their invoices via computer and believed a majority of daycares submit invoices via computer. Sen. Timberlake stated he believed delayed payments were a systemic problem in the State. Sen. Timberlake further stated that the response that the FOAA request for records would cost \$250,000 and take four years was a way of creating an obstruction of getting information.

Rep. Perkins wanted to clarify his earlier statement, stating his earlier statements were in no way meant to diminish the problem of late payments for Daycares, or to expand the Committee's scope of work, and that he completely agreed with Rep. Mastraccio's statements on FOAA and it may be beneficial for the Committee to take up the issue of FOAA as a separate topic, perhaps even have the Public Access Ombudsman come and speak with the Committee to discuss complaints the Ombudsman has received regarding FOAA requests.

Sen. Bennett stated his major concern with the FOAA request, stating the Committee has a unique ability to provide accountability into certain State functions, and that there seems to be a lack of accountability, and also the fact that DHHS would require such a large payment to complete the request.

Sen. Hickman stated that, in his 13 going on 14 years in the Legislature, there has been complaints about how long it takes to get a FOAA request honored, and sometimes they do not get honored at all. Sen. Hickman added that when there is a system where public information should be released to the public when it is requested and it takes three years, people give up. Sen. Hickman stated that there were instances of

people making a FOAA request and that cannot get the information they're asking for, who then turn to a committee member and ask the member to get the information from the department, which the member then receives. Because of this, Sen. Hickman stated some people think that the system is broken because it takes a member of a committee to get the information they should be able to get through their own FOAA request.

Sen. Hickman further stated that he just recently sent an email to the Department requesting information about a caseworker who is helping a foster family, who have not been reimbursed for the payments they have made on behalf of children. Sen. Hickman stated the caseworker has not been reimbursed for her expenses for a year, and the foster family has reached out to Sen. Hickman three times to request he continue to ask where are the payments for this family who are taking care of children in State custody. Sen. Hickman added it is not just Daycare centers who are not being paid on time, it's caseworkers not being reimbursed on time, and resource families not being reimbursed in a timely manner. Sen. Hickman stated even if the matter of delayed payments from the State is broader than DHHS, this is the concern in front of the Committee now and looking into this may reveal there is a systemic problem across State government.

Rep. Lee stated he believed the issue of delayed payments seemed to be one for this Committee. On the FOAA issue, Rep. Lee, who sits on the Judiciary Committee, stated the Judiciary Committee is the committee of jurisdiction on FOAA issues, and there is a FOAA Ombudsman, as well as a separate standing committee that looks into FOAA issues, therefore it seems like those committees and the FOAA Ombudsman could look into the FOAA issue raised in the letter today.

Rep. Lee further stated he is curious to hear from Channel 8 what their response was to the letter from DHHS regarding the cost and time involved in the FOAA request as the statute states that the estimate of monetary amount as well as time it would take to complete the request has to be in good faith, and the response from DHHS does not seem to be a good faith one.

Sen. Timberlake stated he did not have an answer as to how Channel 8 responded to the FOAA response letter from DHHS, however, he is sure Channel 8 would give a reply if the Committee asked them.

Sen. Duson thanked Rep. Lee for summarizing the other oversight opportunities on FOAA, and wanted to add she is also curious about the FOAA response letter to Channel 8 in regards to cost and time involved. Sen. Duson further stated that there were required elements in a FOAA response letter that contained more detailed information other than just the cost and time involved in the FOAA request, and that there needed to be a response. Sen. Duson would also be interested in the response of Channel 8 to the letter they received from the Department.

On the payment processing issue, Sen. Duson believed the OPEGA team was uniquely qualified and experienced in doing this kind of review as it was a data driven review; how many invoices have you received, how long does it take to process the payments, are there standards that most payments are supposed to be out in 30 days; so the review would be looking to see if they are meeting those standards and where they are not and are there trends. Sen. Duson added that smaller operations such as Daycares are not in a position to wait three months for payment and this really impacts the availability of services for families.

Sen. Timberlake asked the chairs to ask Director Schleck to send a letter to Channel 8 to ask them what their response was to the time and cost involved in the FOAA request, as well as sending a letter to DHHS asking them how they responded to the FOAA request from Channel 8.



Sen. Farrin thanked Rep. Lee for his input regarding FOAA statute. Sen. Farrin also agreed with Sen. Duson, that OPEGA can look into the late payments from to Daycares from a data driven standpoint looking at what the process is. Sen. Farrin further stated it is taxpayers that pay for inefficiencies, and contractors know they will not get paid in 60 or 90 days and contracting bids reflect this knowledge, but noted that small daycare centers and nursing homes do not have the flexibility or availability to inflate their proposals as they are living check to check. Sen. Farrin also stated there could be a fear of retaliation and of payments taking even longer if they raise questions regarding delayed payments.

Rep. Matlack stated she agreed with Sen. Duson with regard to late payments from DHHS, stating she believed the Committee could probably accomplish much in a short period of time by looking at the data results.

Rep. Matlack also stated that if the Committee did ask Channel 8 about the FOAA request, and the Committee received a response back, the Committee should then refer this matter to the FOAA Ombudsman and the FOAA Committee and hopefully they can come up with answers as to why Channel 8's request would take four years and \$250,000 to complete, which she thinks is a ludicrous response to a request for information.

Sen. Hickman summarized the Committee discussion, stating it sounded like there was will from the Committee to direct OPEGA to perform a data driven inquiry about how the Department processes invoices. Sen. Hickman also stated it sounds like there was also a will from this Committee to direct the OPEGA Director to write letters to Channel 8 and to DHHS regarding the FOAA request and transmit whatever response the Committee received to the appropriate oversight, being the Judiciary Committee, the FOAA Committee, and Right to Know Advisory Committee.

Sen. Hickman then stated that the notion that it would take four years to redact data is odd, but understood there would need to be some redactions, which would not be the case if the information was being evaluated by OPEGA, because OPEGA has access to anything that would need to be redacted for the public.

Sen. Timberlake stated he agreed with Sen. Hickman's summary of the discussion so far, but wanted to added he would like the Committee to give Director Schleck permission to have conversations through OPEGA with the FOAA Ombudsman, DHHS, the committees of jurisdiction, as well as Channel 8 to be able to report the results of those conversations back to the Committee.

Rep. Lemelin, who is in his fifth year on the HHS Committee, stated late payments has been an issue that has come up multiple times within the committee and he believed there was a bill before the HHS Committee regarding this issue. Rep. Lemelin spoke about loans, stating many nursing homes are owed millions of dollars and have to get a loan or line of credit for several years while waiting for delayed payments. Rep. Lemelin added that he has heard some banks are turning down loans for this purpose and this is why some nursing homes are closing. Rep. Lemelin stated when the HHS Committee asked about the cause of the delayed payments, the answer they received was that the procedure needed to get the payment processed, either Federally or through the State, took time and so the payment was deferred. Rep. Lemelin further stated the HHS Committee had asked to have the State pay interest to the organizations affected by delayed payments.

In regards to the response of the FOAA request, costing \$250,000 and taking four years to complete, Rep. Lemelin believes it was made as an “off-the-cuff response” to defer providing the information. Rep. Lemelin believed this matter should be looked into.

Sen. Bennett shared with the Committee a report to the HHS Committee from DHHS, dated February 14, 2025, which came out of LD 2082, which requested that DHHS cover the interest costs of delayed payments for certain providers. Sen. Bennett stated there is a lot of data in the report regarding timeliness of contract payments and is a good starting point to looking at delayed payments, but would like the Committee to look deeper on this issue. A copy of that report may be seen here: [Report pursuant to Resolve 2023, Ch. 182, Resolve, to Review the Timeliness of Contract Payments by DHHS](#)

Sen. Hickman stated he has read the report Sen. Bennett shared, and agreed the Committee needs to look deeper than this report for information on delayed payments.

Sen. Hickman next returned to Sen. Duson’s previous comments, asked Sen. Duson if she would like to make a motion.

Sen. Duson deferred to Director Schleck for input in how OPEGA could proceed.

Director Schleck stated there are multiple paths OPEGA could take. Director Schleck stated he believed OPEGA could have information back to the Committee relatively quickly regarding general timeliness standards, if any, for payments from DHHS, by asking targeted questions such as what are the benchmarks whether imposed by statute or internally created, how do they measure themselves or are others measuring them regarding a range of payments that are vital people’s health and welfare etc.

Regarding the FOAA response to Channel 8, Director Schleck suggested for OPEGA to learn if the estimate of cost and time to complete the request was an off-the-cuff reaction, or, if taken at face value, whether it might suggest DHHS had an unmanageable system concerning knowing what they are paying, how they are paying and when.

Rep. Lee stated there is a Public Access Ombudsman Annual report that shows some data in regards to FOAA. Rep. Lee stated that in this report it appeared that when comparing DHHS to other departments in the State there is not a large difference in response times generally to FOAA requests. Rep. Lee stated this appeared to show the FOAA response to Channel 8, and this report, may indicate a problem with the payment issue. That report may be found here: [Public Access Ombudsman Annual Report for 2024](#)

Sen. Duson asked Director Schleck for clarification, summarizing the conversation as she understood it, that Director Schleck is asking for the Committee to authorize him to do a request for information around standards and procedures that would then, based on that answer, give him enough information to present a scope of work to the Committee.

Director Schleck agreed with Sen. Duson’s summary and further adding it should not take four years and \$250,000 to find out if DHHS has benchmarks, they either do or they don’t, and then the Committee can work from there.

Sen. Duson stated she is certain that there are standards out there for payment processing as DHHS has to function under the Federal Government's accounting standards, but she is concerned to hear DHHS does not have a tracking system for invoices. Sen. Duson stated she had every confidence in the OPEGA staff to evaluate the data points and test those against standards to discover trends.

### **Motion and Committee Vote**

Sen. Duson made the following motion, with a friendly amendment from Sen. Bennett, to direct OPEGA to formally request information from DHHS concerning timeliness and processing requirements for a range of agency payments to others, generally, to consult the report suggested by Senator Bennett as necessary and appropriate, and to develop a proposed scope of review for Committee approval that seeks to examine the timeliness of payments with regard to foster children in daycare, specifically. The motion was seconded by Rep. Perkins. The motion was approved unanimously by all Committee Members. (Ten members were present for the vote and two members later voted by absentee vote as allowed by Committee Rules.)

### **Motion and Committee Vote**

Sen. Hickman asked the Committee if there was a motion regarding the FOAA response to Channel 8.

Sen. Timberlake made the motion, with a friendly amendment from Rep. Lee, to task the OPEGA Director with sending letters with requests for answers and gathering information by other appropriate means as to the circumstances surrounding the Freedom of Access Act request by news channel 8 for records (including agency reply estimating cost and timing) concerning the timeliness of payments for foster care children in daycare, and as part of this effort, to consult with the Public Access Ombudsman in the Attorney General's office and the Right to Know Advisory Committee, appropriately, in connection with this information gathering. The motion was seconded by Rep. Mastraccio. The motion was approved unanimously by all Committee Members. (Ten members were present for the vote and two members later voted by absentee vote as allowed by Committee Rules.)

### **Director's Report Continued**

Director Schleck informed the Committee that OPEGA was in the process of considering how they are coming back to the Committee with a scope of work on the Office of Cannabis Policy conflict concerns as well as Juniper Ridge concerns. Director Schleck added that once the Committee has further meetings on Home Energy Assistance concerns, and Riverview and Dorothea Dix concerns, then he will come back to ask the Committee about a relative priority of work for OPEGA on these matters.

Rep. Mastraccio asked for a review of Committee meeting dates.

Director Schleck stated, subject to the Chairs, March 14<sup>th</sup> 2025, would include an invitation to representatives from DHHS to discuss Riverview and Dorothea Dix staffing and staff safety, immediately following a refresher briefing from OPEGA on OPEGA's information gathering.

Director Schleck stated, subject to the Chairs, March 28<sup>th</sup>, 2025, would include the Director of the Maine Housing Authority to come answer questions on Home Energy Assistance concerns. The March 28<sup>th</sup>

meeting would also include the presentation of the OPEGA report on Maine Veterans Homes Select Financial Operations. The meeting following March 28<sup>th</sup> would include a public hearing on the OPEGA report, and the meeting following the public hearing could include a work session regarding the report.

Sen. Duson added she has sent a note to her legislative aide, asking him to be in touch with Director Schleck around finding a useful time for the Committee for an overview of the Blue Ribbon Commission Report.

## **Adjourn**

Sen. Hickman adjourned the Government Oversight Committee, without objection, at approximately 11:09 am.