

# Voter Summary

Proposed Citizen Initiative: For Our Children and Families - public-language reader

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Proposed Citizen Initiative: For Our Children and Families

### What this proposal does

"For Our Children and Families" reforms Maine's family law process to protect children before conflict escalates, reduce unnecessary court delays and costs, and ensure parents are treated fairly - whether or not they can afford a lawyer.

The proposal does not eliminate courts or lawyers.

It reorders the process so neutral fact-finding and child safety come first, before adversarial tactics take hold.

### Key changes voters should know about

#### 1. Children come first - before litigation

Independent fact-finding happens early through Guardians ad Litem and safety screening.

Allegations are assessed before lawyers can escalate disputes through motions and hearings.

#### 2. Fewer hearings, faster resolution

Limits serial interim hearings that prolong cases.

Requires courts to move family cases toward final resolution on a defined timeline.

Reduces repeated court appearances that exhaust families and harm children.

#### 3. Neutral mediation before escalation

Creates an Office of Family Mediation and Parental Protection.

Encourages early, voluntary mediation before adversarial litigation intensifies.

#### 4. Protection against abuse of the system

Penalizes knowingly false or manipulative abuse claims used to gain leverage over children.

Distinguishes clearly between good-faith safety concerns and bad-faith weaponization.

#### 5. Transparency instead of secrecy

Requires anonymized public reporting on:

- case length
- hearing frequency

- attorney fee approvals
- use of Guardians ad Litem
- patterns of procedural abuse

Focuses on systemic accountability, not targeting individual victims.

## **6. Accountability where harm is proven**

Criminalizes intentional parental alienation.

Allows children, once adults, to seek civil accountability if lawyers knowingly helped destroy a parent-child relationship.

## **7. Judicial independence preserved**

Courts retain authority to implement rules.

No change limits emergency protection for genuine abuse victims.

## **What this proposal is not**

- It does not silence abuse victims.
- It does not eliminate lawyers or courts.
- It does not force mediation in dangerous situations.

It protects real victims while stopping repeat misuse of the system that harms children.