



March 20, 2023

Senator Anne Carney
Representative Matt Moonen
Honorable Members of the Judiciary Committee
Maine State Legislature
c/o Legislative Information Office
100 State House Station
Augusta, ME 04333

RE: Testimony in support of LD 564: An Act to Improve Access to Civil Legal Services

Dear Senator Carney, Representative Moonen, and honorable members of the Judiciary Committee:

My name is Richard A. Hooks Wayman, and I am a resident of Maine and serve as the President & CEO for VOA Northern New England which is headquartered in Brunswick. I wish to offer this letter as my written testimony in support of LD 546 for greater investment in civil legal services.

Volunteers of America (VOA) Northern New England is a faith-based community nonprofit that works with households experiencing deep poverty, disabilities, and homelessness. Our organization provides direct care to tenants and program participants in our community housing and social service programs. Through our work in Maine communities across nine counties, I hear how our tenants, residents, and program participants wait to receive adequate legal representation. Many never receive access to counsel for issues related to housing, income supports, health care access, family law matters, and entitlements from public agencies due to a lack of capacity at legal service offices. At times, our residents come to us seeking legal advice, but we are not equipped or able to provide them with this important resource.

Additionally, many years ago I served as a legal aid attorney in Minnesota and remember the exhaustion and frustration from having too many intake sheets and not enough hours to offer advice or on-going representation. I know that I helped to stabilize families, improved the prosperity of individuals, and vindicated the rights of my clients through my representation. The work of civil legal services changes lives and makes our communities healthier. Civil legal services are fundamental elements of our democracy and justice system.

Civil legal services require sustained investments to build capacity. LD 564 will help to ensure that Mainers with low incomes (over 360,000 persons) have access to direct representation and legal advice. It will work to ensure that all Mainers, regardless of income, have access to information about their civil legal rights and remedies.

I would ask you to give this bill serious consideration and your approval. Thank you for your public service to Maine.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Richard A. Hooks Wayman". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Richard A. Hooks Wayman
President & CEO
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