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Good Morning. My name is Angela Cannon and for the last 15 years I have been an Assistant District Attorney at the District Attorney's Office in Cumberland County. Since 2019, I have been the Team Leader of the Domestic Violence Unit and have predominantly prosecuted domestic violence cases, both at the felony and misdemeanor level.

When I went to law school in 2004, my goal was to become a prosecutor. During my third year of law school, I worked as an intern at the Cumberland County District Attorney's Office and began my career with the office when I graduated from law school and passed the bar exam. I loved it. Since becoming a prosecutor, I have often said that if I could not be a prosecutor, I don't know what else I would do. However, increasingly I find myself trying to answer the question what other career would I want to do as the one I love has started to eat away at my happiness and mental wellbeing.

Fifteen years ago when I began as a prosecutor, it was not an easy career to break into. Jobs as prosecutors were scarce – there was not a high level of turnover in the world of prosecution. However, in the years since the COVID-19 pandemic struck several attorneys have left the world of prosecution moving to the private sector, for other legal

opportunities, or leaving the practice of law all together. This is not a situation unique to Cumberland County.

Since COVID-19 hit, the work of the criminal justice system has changed dramatically. Everyone is familiar with the backlog the COVID-19 pandemic created in the court system. This has a direct impact on the job of prosecutors. In the last few years, the court in Cumberland has added an additional 14 court lists per month to the schedule. Twelve of these lists are plea lists – court dates for people to appear to resolve their pending criminal matter. Two of these lists are added court dates for the mental health docket. And this number does not include the court dates and schedule of trials or motion hearings. Each of these lists requires a prosecutor to be court to handle the court matters. Sometimes, more than one prosecutor needs to handle matters on the list. Each case on these lists need to be reviewed and prepared by a prosecutor. This is a great increase to the workload of prosecutors.

The judiciary and defense bar has said that prosecution controls its own workload and thus, the workload of the court and the defense bar. I have to disagree. The crime rate controls the workload for the prosecution, court, and defense bar. Prosecutors take an oath to uphold and enforce the laws of the State of Maine. What elected district attorneys and prosecutors have been repeatedly asked to do over the last few years is to ignore the laws and those who are violating it. To do so is actually a violation of the oath we take when we become prosecutors.

District Attorneys and prosecutors statewide have taken measures to decrease the backlog of the courts. In 2021, in Cumberland County, approximately 1,000 criminal cases were dismissed by the district attorney's office. Additionally, prosecutors apply a stricter review of cases when deciding to bring forth criminal complaints. Also, more cases are being diverted away from the criminal justice system with the use of restorative justice. However, even those cases going through the restorative justice process requires a prosecutor to review the case and oversee it through the process. Overall, the number

of criminal complaints being filed with the court are less today than the number filed before the COVID-19 pandemic.

The pandemic is not the only factor changing the face of prosecution. Criminal cases are more complex today than they were 15 years ago. The majority of police departments now use body cameras for their officers and cameras in police cruisers creating hours of videos that needs to be reviewed. Digital evidence has greatly increased given that just about every person owns a cell phone. More and more people have home cameras, doorbell cameras, as well as stores having surveillance systems – all of which creates evidence that needs to be watched and reviewed when deciding to charge a criminal case.

Prosecutors are carrying caseloads far above the recommended levels stated by the American Bar Association and has led many prosecutors to questions if they are even able to meet their ethical obligations. The workload is simply crushing.

When the Maine Prosecutor's Association asked me to prepare remarks for you, I said yes, but then immediately wondered when I would be able to do so. As I sit my couch at 1 AM writing this, I realize this only time I have to do so. I find myself working at 1 AM for the third night in the row, not preparing for a trial or writing a brief for the law court, both of which usually requires extra work hours, but simply to keep up with my everyday caseload. It is now common that after working a full work day, and once my eight and nine year old sons are tucked into bed, I pull out my work laptop and settle in to work into the early morning hours just so I can hope to keep my head above water. This workload, this pace – it is simply not sustainable. So I find myself asking again, what other career could I be happy with besides prosecution? I know I am not alone in these thoughts. These are the same thoughts of prosecutors statewide.