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Good afternoon. My name is Elizabeth Cantey. As I'm sure you are all aware, Maine is facing a constitutional crisis. There are not enough lawyers in Maine to meet the overwhelming need for indigent criminal defense; the current system is proving to be inadequate. Currently, there are more than 100 people sitting in jail awaiting an attorney. LD2219 is one step the legislature can take in remedying this crisis.

I am in my second year at Maine's only law school. I attended University of Maine School of Law both for the small class sizes and access to faculty, but also because I planned to practice criminal defense in the state I've called home for the past 8 years. Unfortunately, the harsh realities of Maine's current system have forced me to consider alternatives. To practice criminal defense, I would either need to "hang my own shingle" (by opening my own firm), or work for a private defense firm. Neither are options I'm interested in pursuing. I am now considering going out of state to garner the necessary experience. I am a part of a student organization, *Students for the Sixth Amendment*; many of whom want to provide indigent criminal defense. Yet, we all face this dilemma.

Maine needs more attorneys; funding for a more robust public defense system would begin to patch the holes in the current system. It would provide jobs for new attorneys, like myself, who want to practice indigent criminal defense.

There is not a lack of desire in Maine's Prospective Lawyer community; we are passionate about upholding defendants' constitutionally guaranteed rights in a court of law, especially those who are most vulnerable: indigent defendants. However, the current system does not allow us to meet this need. This funding would be one step in addressing the constitutional crisis Maine is facing. Thank you for your time.