

Sarah Johnson
Sanford
LD 2214

2/28/24

RE: LD 2214 An Act to Make Supplemental Appropriations and Allocations for the Expenditures of State Government, General Fund and Other Funds and to Change Certain Provisions of the Law Necessary to the Proper Operations of State Government for the Fiscal Years Ending June 30, 2024 and June 30, 2025

Honorable Members of the Committees on Appropriations and Financial Affairs and Judiciary,

My name is Sarah Johnson and I live in Sanford. I support funding for indigent legal services as well as other human and community crisis situations that Maine is experiencing now.

It is impressive that Maine's Rainy Day Fund is at its statutory limit. We are well prepared for future emergency situations, and so I hope you will consider funding current emergencies over another future based fund.

We are not supporting and funding preventative programs that adversely affect the overall state's community health. We need more Substance Use Disorder program funding and other mental health and medical care. People are desperate for housing, and we are ignoring our indigent populations by not funding legal services and more alternative court systems.

Maine is not meeting its constitutional requirement and obligation to provide indigent legal services. The entire state suffers for it, but none more than those languishing in jails awaiting trial with no legal counsel. This is far from the equitable system we should have. Under no circumstance should a person's ability to be represented be dependent on their economic state. The legal / court system is frightening and confusing, which are only some of the reasons we all have a constitutional right to counsel. Our communities would only benefit by having the equitable court system that it is supposed to be.

I hope you will consider funding for indigent legal services in Maine. This is both our legal and moral responsibility.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sarah Johnson
Sanford Maine