

Dear Senator Rotundo, Representative Sachs, members of the Appropriations and Financial Affairs Committee, Senator Carney, Representative Moonen, and Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary,

My name is Terence Miller, and I am the Advocacy Director at Preble Street. At Preble Street, our mission is to provide accessible, barrier-free services to empower people experiencing problems with homelessness, housing, hunger, and poverty and to advocate for solutions to these problems. I am requesting the AFA and Judiciary Committee members' support in making the one-time \$4 million in 2023-24 funding for civil legal aid a baseline increase starting in 2024-2025.

At Preble Street, our clients and community are facing the ongoing challenges caused by housing instability, food insecurity, and deep poverty. Our clients face a myriad of civil legal problems and issues daily. Gratefully, the Maine Homeless Law Project is staffed monthly with the support and assistance of the Maine Volunteer Lawyers Project (VLP), one of the seven civil legal aid providers in Maine. VLP identifies volunteer law firms that provide critical legal advice and assistance to individuals, youth, and families facing denial of benefits, discrimination in housing, education, employment, family law issues, and domestic abuse. The VLP is an incredible civil legal resource that assists the most vulnerable Mainers with legal advice.

Preble Street works closely with two other civil legal providers- Pine Tree Legal and Maine Equal Justice. Pine Tree Legal provides Preble Street clients with representation in various landlord-tenant issues, including eviction. Maine Equal Justice is a long-standing partner of Preble Street, providing invaluable advice on General Assistance for our clients. Without access to civil legal aid provided by these three civil legal aid offices, the most vulnerable Mainers would not receive the accurate, up-to-date, and specific information about the legal rights they need when facing eviction, domestic violence, elder abuse, and exploitation, obstacles to veterans' benefits, navigating a complex immigration process, barriers to healthcare access or lack of access to appropriate education.

On behalf of Preble Street, I ask that you support making the one-time \$4 million in 2023-24 funding for civil legal aid a baseline increase starting in 2024-2025.

Thank you.



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