

LD 375 – An Act to Require the University of Maine School of Law to Provide an Online Degree Program

March 3rd, 2025

Senator Raffety, Representative Murphy, and Members of the Educational and Cultural Affairs Committee

My name is Courtney Gary-Allen. Many of you may know me in my role as the Executive Director of the Maine Recovery Action Project (ME-RAP). I am here today in my personal capacity.

I am a first-year law student in the University of Maine School of Law's "flex time" program. I am also a full-time working professional and an Augusta City Councilor At-Large, commuting from Augusta to Portland three days a week to attend classes while balancing my job and community service. I am here today in strong support of LD 375 because Maine needs more lawyers, and we must make law school accessible to working professionals if we want to meet that need.

Maine is facing a legal crisis—there are simply not enough attorneys to meet the needs of our communities, especially those who are indigent. Rural areas in particular are seeing a sharp decline in attorneys willing and able to provide critical legal services. If we want to encourage more Mainers to enter the legal profession and serve those who need it most, we need to remove unnecessary barriers to legal education.

As a student in the "flex time" program, I have firsthand experience with how difficult it is to pursue a legal education while working full time. The commute from Augusta to Portland several times a week is not only financially burdensome but also physically and emotionally exhausting. This structure disproportionately affects those of us who are already embedded in our communities, working in public service, and trying to balance professional and personal responsibilities. For many working professionals who would make excellent attorneys, the current system simply makes law school nearly impossible.

Creating an online degree program at Maine Law would allow more non-traditional students—those with careers, families, and community ties—to obtain a legal education without uprooting their lives or making unreasonable sacrifices. This is not just about convenience; it is about helping to ensure that Maine has the lawyers it so desperately needs.

If we are serious about addressing Maine's access to justice crisis, we must create pathways for Mainers who are willing and eager to serve. LD 375 is a necessary step in that direction. I urge you to support this bill and help ensure that legal education in Maine is accessible, practical, and responsive to the needs of our state.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I am happy to answer any questions.

Courtney Gary-Allen

Maine Law 1L Flex Student