

STATE OF MAINE

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MAINE PROSECUTORS ASSOCIATION SHIRA BURNS, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

**“An Act to Protect and Increase Access to Justice in
Civil Legal Matters for Persons with Low Incomes”
Before the Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary
Public Hearing Date: April 17, 2025
Testimony in Support of LD 1022**

Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary. My name is Shira Burns and I represent the Maine Prosecutors Association. I submit this testimony in support of LD 1022.

Civil legal services and the criminal justice system are inherently intertwined. The more legal services there are for victims, the better the outcome of successful prosecution while keeping a victim's basic needs met. The ability to access civil legal services helps with the efficiency of the criminal justice system. Prosecutors are constantly collaborating with civil legal services which in turn gives us answers quicker on how we can proceed with a case – specifically, what a case outcome looks like from a victim's standpoint. This can be in regard to housing, civil lawsuits, protection orders, and even when a defendant is trying to get confidential information about a victim.

Prosecutors are seeing requests made by defense attorneys to subpoena domestic violence and sexual assault victims' counseling records or trying to get access to their cellphone. In these cases, prosecutors rely on representation from civil legal services to file motions to quash on behalf of the victims to secure their privacy. Civil legal services provide a vital role in the criminal justice system. The more we limit their available services, the slower the criminal justice system works.

For these reasons, the Maine Prosecutors Association is in support of LD 1022.