

Ann Dodd-Collins
Portland
LD 1022

Dear Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn, and esteemed members of the Judiciary Committee, my name is Ann Dodd-Collins and I live in Portland.

I am testifying in support of LD 1022, “An Act to Protect and Increase Access to Justice in Civil Legal Aid Matters for Persons with Low Incomes”. As a volunteer I work with organizations who support and care for low income people, both those born in Maine and those who are New Mainers.

The work of our State Legislature, our Congress and the Constitution is to protect the rights and freedoms of all our people. When these rights and freedoms are challenged, we all need to know that we can turn to our judicial system for relief. State investment in civil legal aid is one of the greatest safeguards to ensure access to justice for all Mainers.

In 2023, the Legislature appropriated an additional \$4 million in one-time funding for civil legal aid to meet critical and rising legal needs. Without converting this one-time funding into ongoing support, Maine civil legal aid providers will face significant and harmful cuts when the funding expires in June 2025. This means that Maine people will have fewer places to turn for help. Sustaining and increasing this investment in civil legal aid is crucial for maintaining access to justice.

While I am thinking primarily of asylum seekers, knowing that the chance of being granted asylum is close to zero if they do not have access to legal aid, I am also thinking of the many people I have known while volunteering at Preble Street, people whose lack of legal support for minor infractions can lead to justice denied. I urge you to vote Ought To Pass on LD 1022.

Thank you,
Ann Dodd-Collins