



MAINE ASSOCIATION OF CRIMINAL DEFENSE LAWYERS

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April 23, 2025

Senator Anne Carney, Chair
Representative Amy Kuhn, Chair
Committee on Judiciary
100 State House Station, Room 438
Augusta, ME 04330

RE: LD 1650 – An Act to Allow Paralegals to Be Paid by the Maine Commission on Public Defense Services

Dear Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn, and Members of the Committee on Judiciary,

MACDL supports all efforts to better serve indigent defendants in Maine's criminal justice system - including employment of paralegals by the Maine Commission on Public Defense Services ("PDS"). There is no doubt that paralegals play a vital role in supporting quality legal representation. However, LD 1650 is not the best way to accomplish this objective, and therefore MACDL is neither for nor against LD 1650.

Paralegal standards and rates of compensation should be developed by the Maine Commission on Public Defense Services. PDS was created to oversee and improve our indigent defense system. PDS is better suited than the Legislature to evaluate the operational needs of public defenders and to implement a sustainable, responsive system for paralegal reimbursement - one that considers training, qualifications, case complexity, and fiscal oversight.

Currently, there is already a mechanism through PDS to compensate paralegals for their work on cases. Imposing rigid mandates from the Legislature could inadvertently hinder PDS's flexibility to address evolving needs and fiscal realities.

In short, MACDL urges you to support the mission behind LD 1650, but leave the implementation details to the expertise of the Maine Commission on Public Defense Services. This will ensure that we strengthen our public defense system thoughtfully and responsibly. For these reasons, MACDL is neither for nor against LD 1650.

Sincerely,

/s/ *Eric S. Thistle*
Eric S. Thistle, Esq.
MACDL Member