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Testimony on Behalf of ProsperityME on LD 2212, An Act Making Supplemental Appropriations and Allocations from the General Fund and Other Funds for the Expenditures of State Government and Changing Certain Provisions of the Law Necessary to the Proper Operations of State Government for the Fiscal Years Ending June 30, 2026, and June 30, 2027

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February 27, 2026

Senator Rotundo, Representative Gattine, and esteemed members of the Appropriations and Financial Affairs Committee; Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn, and esteemed members of the Judiciary Committee:

My name is Claude Rwaganje, and I am submitting this testimony on behalf of ProsperityME, a statewide nonprofit organization dedicated to empowering immigrant and refugee communities through financial education, workforce development, housing stability support, and economic advancement. We respectfully request that you include \$3 million in the FY 2026–27 Supplemental Budget to sustain civil legal aid in year two of the biennium and ensure continued access to justice for low-income Mainers.

ProsperityME was founded in 2008 with a simple but powerful goal: to help immigrant and refugee families achieve financial stability and long-term opportunity in Maine. Since then, we have served thousands of New Mainers through financial capability coaching, workforce development, housing stability support, and small business assistance. Our work is focused on helping families move from crisis to stability and from stability to prosperity.

Many of the families we work with face legal challenges that are directly connected to their economic and housing stability. When a family receives an eviction notice, when public benefits are wrongly denied, when a worker's wages are garnished, or when a lease is improperly terminated, the consequences are immediate and severe. These issues are often made more complex by language barriers and unfamiliarity with U.S. legal systems.

ProsperityME does not provide legal representation, but we rely on civil legal service providers as essential partners. These providers help families defend against unlawful evictions; appeal benefit denials, respond to housing disputes, and resolve other legal matters that threaten economic progress. Without access to legal expertise, families can lose housing, fall out of employment, and incur long-term financial harm — outcomes that ripple across schools, workplaces, and community networks.

Civil legal services work in tandem with housing support, workforce programs, and financial coaching to help families remain stable and productive.



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The \$3 million appropriation in 2025 helped prevent families from being left without legal support at a critical time. Demand for these services remains high, and without continued funding, many eligible Mainers will be turned away.

Thank you.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, which appears to read "Claude", is enclosed within a large, hand-drawn blue oval.

**Claude Rwaganje**

Executive Director

**ProsperityME**

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