



Clinics at  
Maine Law

**Testimony of Courtney Beer, University of Maine School of Law Professor and  
Director of the Clinics at Maine Law**

*LD 2212, An Act to Make Supplemental Appropriations and Allocations on 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*

February 27, 2026

Senators Rotundo and Carney, Representatives Gattine and Kuhn, and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committees on Appropriations and Financial Affairs and Judiciary, my name is Courtney Beer and I am a professor at the University of Maine School of Law and Director of the Clinics at Maine Law. Last week you heard from the University of Maine System, of which Maine Law is proudly a part, about its priorities in the FY26-27 supplemental budget. I am writing to provide information on how our clinics leverage your investment in the Maine Civil Legal Services Fund to support low-income Mainers and prepare our future attorney workforce.

Through the Clinics at Maine Law, second- and third-year law students, specially licensed to practice under court and agency rules as student attorneys, provide free legal services to low-income Mainers under the supervision of experienced faculty attorneys. Students represent clients in a wide range of legal matters such as family law, probate, protection from abuse, eviction, youth justice, immigration, access to health care and public benefits, and education.

In 2025 alone, Maine Law students provided nearly 18,000 hours of pro bono legal services to people across the state who could not afford private counsel. Our clients often include survivors of domestic violence, veterans, youth with disabilities, and individuals facing housing or economic instability.

Although the majority of clinic faculty, staff, and student attorneys are based at Maine Law in Portland, our work reaches communities across the entire state. Our student attorneys represent clients from Fort Kent to Kittery and throughout Maine, including many rural communities where access to legal services is especially limited.

The Clinics at Maine Law are supported by a range of public, private, and philanthropic sources, and the Maine Civil Legal Services Commission is one of our most essential and enduring funders. Specifically, we receive 6.5% of the Fund, which because of increased one-time investment in the biennial budget, amounted to \$292,000 in the current fiscal year. The additional funding covers one full supervising attorney position who supervises approximately 125 civil legal matters per year and outreach to 50 to 75 people by 12 student attorneys. Among other expenses, the remaining funds cover an administrative position, our Protection from Abuse project covering the PFA docket in Lewiston weekly, targeted outreach projects, and general operating costs.

Reduced funding for the Maine Civil Legal Services and by thus the Clinics would directly affect both who we can train and who we can serve. Clinical programs sit at the intersection of legal education and public service: each student enrolled represents real clients across the state. When fewer students are able to participate, fewer low-income Mainers receive representation, legal assistance, and access to legal information through community outreach. In short, clinic capacity translates directly into statewide legal services capacity.

Clinical legal education also creates a powerful multiplier effect. When law students train in civil legal aid work, they do more than serve clients during law school—they carry that experience into their careers. Many go on to work in legal aid, government, rural practice, or provide pro bono services in the private sector. The Clinics expose students to the legal needs of communities across Maine, particularly in rural and underserved areas where attorney shortages are most acute, and many graduates ultimately remain in the state to serve those communities.

Across Maine, more than 80% of civil legal needs among low-income residents go unmet. Civil legal aid helps people remain safely housed, access essential benefits and health care, and stabilize their families during times of crisis. Continued and growing State investment for civil legal aid will help ensure that Mainers can access legal help while also sustaining the training pipeline that prepares lawyers to serve Maine communities in the years ahead.

Thank you for your time and your consideration.

Respectfully submitted,

Courtney Beer, Esq.  
Professor and Director of the Clinics at Maine Law  
University of Maine School of Law