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DISTRICT VI

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DISTRICT VII

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DISTRICT VIII

MAINE PROSECUTORS ASSOCIATION
SHIRA BURNS, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

“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”

Before the Joint Standing Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs and the Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary

Public Hearing Date: February 27, 2026

Testimony Neither For Nor Against LD 2212

Senator Rotundo, Representative Gattine, Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs and the Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary. My name is Shira Burns, I represent the Maine Prosecutors Association and I submit this testimony in support of including \$3 million in the FY 2026-27 supplemental budget to sustain Maine’s statewide civil legal aid network.

Civil legal services and the criminal justice system are inherently intertwined. The availability of legal services for victims increases the likelihood of successful prosecution while helping ensure that victims’ basic needs are addressed. Access to civil legal services also improves the efficiency of the criminal justice system.

Prosecutors regularly collaborate with civil legal services providers, which enables us to move cases forward more effectively. These partnerships are especially important in matters involving housing stability, civil protection orders, related civil litigation, and efforts to obtain confidential victim information.

Prosecutors frequently encounter defense efforts to subpoena domestic violence and sexual assault victims’ counseling records or to obtain access to personal data such as cellphone records. In these cases, civil legal services attorneys play an essential role by representing victims and filing motions to quash subpoenas in order to protect victim privacy and safety. Civil legal services are a critical part of ensuring that victims are protected throughout the criminal process.

Maintaining the funding provided in the first year of the biennium will help ensure that prosecutors can continue to rely on these partnerships and that victims receive the support and protection they need. Limiting civil legal services would weaken not only support for vulnerable individuals but also the efficiency and integrity of the justice system itself.

For these reasons, the Maine Prosecutors Association supports including \$3 million in the FY 2026–27 supplemental budget to sustain Maine’s civil legal aid network.

Shira S. Burns

Shira Burns, Esq.
Executive Director
Maine Prosecutors Association
6 State House Station
Augusta, Maine 04333
207-281-5155