



**Testimony of Jessica Fay for  
The Maine Council on Aging  
February 27, 2026  
Supplemental Budget – Judiciary**

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 Jess Fay, and I am the Policy and Advocacy Director for the Maine Council on Aging (MCOA) which is a broad, multidisciplinary network of over 140 organizations, businesses, municipalities, and older community members working to ensure we can all live healthy, engaged, and secure lives with choices and opportunities as we age at home and in community settings. We respectfully request that you amend LD 2212 to include \$3 million in the FY 2026–27 Supplemental Budget, in addition to the \$1.3 million baseline for the Maine Civil Legal Services Fund, to sustain civil legal aid in year two of the biennium.

Justice is a fundamental principle in the United States that it is enshrined in the preamble to the Constitution. The role of government is to assure, to the best of its ability, that every person can expect to have access to justice. That requires that everyone—regardless of financial status—have meaningful access to the legal system, including legal advice, representation, and remedies for individual problems. Navigating the legal system to receive a just outcome is complicated and often requires professional support.

Twenty-nine percent of older Maine people live in low-income families. Almost 40% of people in Maine age 55 and over are considered low income. Civil legal services are essential to older Mainers in accessing and understanding health care, Social Security, pension and retirement benefits, consumer issues such as creditor problems, financial abuse and exploitation, and guardianship.

Legal Services for Maine Elders provides critical legal services to older Mainers who are facing evictions, have been denied critical benefits, have been scammed into giving away their money or transferring ownership of their homes, and so much more. We must ensure they have the resources to continue to address the most critical civil legal needs of older Mainers.

The Legislature previously addressed the need for civil legal services with one-time funding. While that funding was valuable and appreciated, the legal issues facing Maine people are ongoing. Continued, stable funding is necessary to ensure that older Mainers with low incomes retain meaningful access to justice. I urge you to act in support of LD 2212 to assist older Mainers with low incomes in accessing justice.