



TESTIMONY OF MICHAEL KEBEDE  
LD 2212 – Ought to Pass

**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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Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary

February 27, 2026

Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn, and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary, greetings. My name is Michael Kebede, and I am policy director for the American Civil Liberties Union of Maine, a statewide organization committed to advancing and preserving civil liberties guaranteed by the Maine and U.S. Constitutions.

On behalf of our members, we urge you to include \$3 million in the FY 2026–27 supplemental budget to sustain Maine’s statewide civil legal aid network.

Civil legal aid plays a vital role in ensuring meaningful access to justice for Mainers who cannot afford legal representation. In most civil cases—including those involving housing, family stability, and access to basic necessities—there is no right to counsel. As a result, many low-income Mainers must navigate complex legal proceedings on their own, often against parties with substantially greater resources.

Adequate support for civil legal aid is necessary to ensure that access to the courts does not depend on a person’s income. Without legal assistance, many individuals are unable to effectively assert their rights or protect their interests in matters that have profound consequences for their lives and families.

The Legislature made an important investment in civil legal aid in the first year of the biennium. We respectfully urge you to sustain that investment by including \$3 million in the FY 2026–27 supplemental budget, in addition to the baseline \$1.3 million appropriation. Maintaining this funding will help ensure that civil legal aid providers across Maine can continue to offer assistance to individuals who would otherwise face the legal system alone.



Sustained funding for civil legal aid helps preserve fairness in the legal system and supports the principle that justice should be accessible to all Mainers, regardless of financial means.

Thank you for your consideration.