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THE MAINE SENATE
131st Legislature

**Testimony of Senator Nicole Grohoski
In Support of LD 2090, "An Act to Modernize and Consolidate Certain Court Facilities"**

**Before the Committee on Judiciary
28 February 2024**

Greetings Senator Carney, Representative Moonen, and honorable members of the Judiciary Committee. My name is Nicole Grohoski and I am honored to represent the 22 coastal and island communities of Senate District 7, 21 of which are in Hancock County. I am here to present and express support for LD 2090, *An Act to Modernize and Consolidate Certain Court Facilities*.

This bill would authorize the Judicial Branch to bond to fund the construction of a new courthouse in Hancock County, in addition to renovating existing court facilities in both Androscoggin and Somerset Counties to consolidate their District and Superior Courthouses. I believe that addressing the deficiencies of our current courthouses in these three counties is essential to ensuring the fair administration of justice and the safety of all individuals involved in legal proceedings. In my capacity representing much of Hancock County, I will focus on our courthouse in my testimony.

The current courthouse in Hancock County faces numerous challenges that compromise the integrity and efficiency of our legal system. These deficiencies include:

- **Proximity of Victims and Alleged Perpetrators:** The existing layout allows victims of crimes to come into close contact with alleged perpetrators, which can be a re-traumatizing and unsafe experience.
- **Judicial Movement Among Defendants:** Judges must walk among defendants to and from their chambers and courtrooms. This is a safety risk and affects the ability of judges to maintain an appropriate and expected level of detachment.
- **Lack of Differentiated Spaces:** The absence of a clear differentiation between public and secure spaces for court staff poses a security risk. A new courthouse would be designed to enhance safety and provide confidentiality as appropriate for certain aspects of court business.
- **Inadequate Conference Rooms and Restrooms:** Insufficient conference rooms and restrooms impede the smooth functioning of the courthouse. This affects the efficiency of

legal proceedings and the comfort of all individuals utilizing the facilities. Many court users, including attorneys and their clients, need private space in which to discuss confidential information.

- **Accessibility Issues:** The current layout poses challenges for individuals with disabilities, who must navigate an uphill ramp from the back entrance to access courtrooms or elevators.
- **Storage Constraints:** On-site storage areas are full, hampering the courthouse's ability to manage case-related materials and documents effectively.
- **Inadequate Space for Jury Selection Days:** The existing courthouse lacks sufficient space for jury selection days, leading to overcrowding with 175-200 people vying for 80 seats inside the courtroom.

Building a new courthouse in Hancock County to address these deficiencies would demonstrate our commitment to upholding the principles of justice, fairness, and accessibility within our legal system. A new courthouse would meet the evolving needs of our county and ensure the efficient and secure administration of justice, and in doing so, protect the integrity of our legal system.

Thank you for your time and consideration of this bill. I look forward to working with you through the committee process and ask for your full support of LD 2090. I would be glad to answer any questions.