

AARON M. FREY
ATTORNEY GENERAL



TEL: (207) 626-8800
TTY USERS CALL MAINE RELAY 711

STATE OF MAINE
OFFICE OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL
6 STATE HOUSE STATION
AUGUSTA, MAINE 04333-0006

REGIONAL OFFICES
84 HARLOW ST. 2ND FLOOR
BANGOR, MAINE 04401
TEL: (207) 941-3070
FAX: (207) 941-3075

125 PRESUMPCOT ST., SUITE 26
PORTLAND, MAINE 04103
TEL: (207) 822-0260
FAX: (207) 822-0259

14 ACCESS HIGHWAY, STE. 1
CARIBOU, MAINE 04736
TEL: (207) 496-3792
FAX: (207) 496-3291

Testimony in Support of LD 210, An Act Making Unified 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, 2025, June 30, 2026 and June 30, 2027

Good afternoon, Senator Rotundo, Representative Gattine, and esteemed members of the Appropriations and Financial Affairs Committee, and Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn, and esteemed members of the Judiciary Committee. My name is Chris Taub, and I am the Chief Deputy at the Office of the Attorney General ("Office"). On behalf of Attorney General Aaron Frey, I appreciate this opportunity to present the Office's FY2026-2027 Biennial Budget and its new initiatives before you today.

The budget for the Office begins on Page A-110 and is organized in 10 program areas.

The first program may be found on page A-111 under the heading ADMINISTRATION – ATTORNEY GENERAL 0310. There are 11 initiatives proposed under this program.

The first initiative transfers one research assistant MSEA-B position from the Human Services Division program, Other Special Revenue Funds to the Administration – Attorney General program, General Fund and provides funding for related all other costs. This position is the Victim Witness Advocate Coordinator, which provides technical assistance and training for victim witness advocates statewide. The position also oversees the Victims Compensation Fund, which is based in the Office. This position is currently funded with Victims of Crime Act ("VOCA") federal funds through the Maine Department of Health and Human Services ("DHHS"). The federal government is reducing VOCA funding distributions and the Office has been informed by DHHS that there is no longer sufficient funding for this position. However, the need for this position continues. It has been integral in improving victim witness advocacy services across the state.

The second initiative transfers 3 research assistant MSEA-B positions from the Human Services Division program, Other Special Revenue Funds to the Administration – Attorney General program, General Fund and provides funding for related all other costs. These positions are Victim Witness Advocates ("VWAs"). VWAs work with victims of crimes and their families to help them understand the criminal court process and provide education on the statutory rights of victims to access criminal proceedings. For the Office, the work of the Victim Witness Advocates is usually in support of the families of homicide victims. These positions are currently funded with VOCA federal funds through DHHS. The federal government is reducing

VOCA funding distributions and the Office has been informed by DHHS that there is no longer sufficient funding from the federal government. The loss of these positions would greatly hamper the support to victims that has long been provided by the Office.

The third initiative continues and makes permanent one Assistant Attorney General position previously established in Public Law 2023, chapter 489 and provides funding for related All Other costs. This position provides advice, counsel, and legal representation to the Department of Corrections regarding claims made to the Maine Human Rights Commission. While the law created a new cause of action under the Maine Human Rights Act against the state and recognized there would be an increased need for legal services, the Assistant Attorney General position it created to address that need did not carry into the next biennium. The Office expects that as long as this law remains in effect, there will be an increased need for legal services.

The fourth initiative establishes one Assistant Attorney General position to support the Department of Marine Resources (“DMR”) and provides funding for related All Other costs. For some time, DMR has required more legal services than what is currently provided for in the budget. In order to better address the legal services requested by DMR, another Assistant Attorney General is needed.

The fifth initiative continues and makes permanent one Assistant Attorney General position previously established by financial order for the Department of Labor and provides funding for related All Other Costs. This position provides legal services relating to the Maine Paid Family and Medical Leave Act, a program newly enacted last session.

The sixth initiative continues and makes permanent one Assistant Attorney General position previously continued in Public Law 2021, chapter 653 and provides funding for related All Other costs. This position, assigned to the Department of Corrections (“DOC”), provides legal services including litigation, settlement review and negotiation, rulemaking assistance and review, and other consultation as needed. These legal services continue to be needed by DOC and this initiative would make this position permanent.

The seventh initiative provides funding for the approved reclassification of one Research Assistant MSEA-B position to a Research Assistant MESA-D position. The approved reclassification better aligns the work of this position with a more appropriate job classification. In particular, the increased workload and addition of supervisory responsibilities contributed to this reclassification being approved.

The eighth initiative provides funding for the approved reorganization of one Research Assistant MSEA-B to a Research Assistant MSEA-D position and provides funding for related All Other costs. Located in the Natural Resources Division of the Office, the job duties of this position were reorganized to better align with the administrative staffing needs of the division.

The ninth initiative provides funding for the approved reorganization of one part-time Research Assistant MSEA-B position from range 22 to range 26. This reorganization aligns the position’s salary and the job duties with the appropriate salary schedule.

The tenth initiative provides funding for statewide technology services provided by the Department of Administrative and Financial Services, Office of Information Technology ("OIT"). This initiative is responsive to what OIT assessed the Office. It reflects new services OIT is providing to support the Office's collection, reporting, and analysis of traffic stop data for the purpose of identifying and eliminating any profiling, pursuant to P.L. 2023 Ch. 368. It also reflects an increase in OIT rates and that the Office may have been incorrectly billed by OIT in previous budgets.

The eleventh and final initiative under this program is to continue and make permanent one Assistant Attorney General position previously established in Financial Order 003687 F5 and provides funding for related All Other costs. The financial order restored funding for an Assistant Attorney General position that was defunded when the Legislature repealed the Hospital and Health Care Provider Cooperation Act in 2023, which terminated an assessment on hospitals. This assessment funded a long-established Assistant Attorney General position in the Consumer Protection Division. This position is vital to the division. It is one of only five attorneys assigned to consumer protection issues and the position is currently filled by the chief of the Consumer Protection Division. This Assistant Attorney General not only manages the division, but also is the expert in antitrust law, charitable organization, and complex multistate actions with particular focus on pharmaceuticals. This initiative restores funding for the position.

The next program starts on Page A-114 under the heading CHIEF MEDICAL EXAMINER – OFFICE OF 0412. There are 8 initiatives proposed under this program.

The first initiative provides one-time funding to allow for the purchase, shipping and installation of a low dose x-ray forensic imaging scanner.

The second initiative provides funding to cover an increase in the medical exam fees from \$100 to \$150.

The third initiative provides funding pursuant to Title 22, section 3024 to cover the increased mileage reimbursement rate of \$0.54 per mile.

The fourth initiative provides funding for the increased frequency and cost of forensic toxicology testing.

The fifth initiative provides funding for the cost of full coverage insurance on the morgue trailer.

The sixth initiative establishes 2 Medical Examiner Assistant positions and provides funding for related All Other costs.

The seventh initiative establishes 2 OCME Planning and Research Associate I positions, one Medicolegal Death Investigator I position and provides funding for related All Other costs.

The eighth and final initiative provides funding for statewide technology services provided by the Department of Administrative and Financial Services, Office of Information Technology.

The Office expects that the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner will provide more information on the need for these initiatives.

The next program is found on Page A-116 under the heading CIVIL RIGHTS 0039. There is only one initiative proposed under this program, which provides funding for statewide technology services provided by the Department of Administrative and Financial Services, Office of Information Technology.

The next program is also found on Page A-117 under the heading DISTRICT ATTORNEYS SALARIES 0409. There are no initiatives proposed under this program.

The next program is found on Page A-118 under the heading FHM ATTORNEY GENERAL 0947. There are no initiatives proposed under this program.

The next program is found on Page A-119 under the heading HUMAN SERVICES DIVISION 0696. There are 3 initiatives proposed under this program.

The first initiative transfers one research assistant MSEA-D position from the Human Services Division program, Other Special Revenue Funds to the Administration – Attorney General program, General Fund and provides funding for related all other costs. This initiative relates to the first initiative located on page A-111 and would transfer this position out of this program.

The second initiative transfers 3 research assistant MSEA-B positions from the Human Services Division program, Other Special Revenue Funds to the Administration – Attorney General program, General Fund and provides funding for related all other costs. This initiative relates to the second initiative located on page A-111 and would transfer these positions out of this program.

The third and final initiative under this program provides funding for statewide technology services provided by the Department of Administrative and Financial Services, Office of Information Technology. This initiative is responsive to what OIT has assessed the Office. While no new services are required from OIT, the basic information we have received supporting the significant assessment is that OIT has increased its rates and the Office has been incorrectly billed at a reduced rate by OIT in previous budgets.

The next program is found on Page A-120 under the heading MAINE MASS VIOLENCE CARE FUND Z400. There are no initiatives proposed under this program.

The next program is also found on Page A-120 under the heading MAINE RECOVERY FUND Z343. There are no initiatives proposed under this program.

The next program is found on Page A-121 under the heading ROAD COMMISSION FUND. There are no initiatives proposed under this program.

The final program is found on Page A-122 under the heading VICTIMS' COMPENSATION BOARD 0711. There are no initiatives proposed under this program.

Thank you for your attention to these initiatives and this concludes the biennial budget presentation for the Office of the Attorney General. We will be happy to answer any questions and will have staff available for any work sessions on these initiatives.