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AARP Maine testimony In Support of LD 210 - Allocations for Civil Legal Service Providers

Greetings Senator Rotundo, Representative Gattine, Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn and members of the Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs and members of the Committee on Judiciary. My name is Bridget Quinn, Associate State Director of Advocacy and Outreach for AARP Maine.

AARP is the nation's largest nonprofit, nonpartisan organization dedicated to empowering Americans 50 and older to choose how they live as they age. On behalf of our nearly 200,000 members statewide, thank you for the opportunity to share testimony today. Today I am testifying in favor of provisions of LD 210 that allocate funds to support civil legal services.

We appreciate the current appropriation in the proposed budget and additional special revenue funds however raise to the committees the need for additional allocations to fund these critical services.

Older adults have unique health and social needs. Many are on fixed incomes. Often, older adults depend on government benefits and services that have complex requirements. Navigating this system can require access to competent legal assistance. Further, older adults are often the target of scams, fraud or financial exploitation and may need legal assistance to protect themselves.

Financial exploitation is the most prevalent form of elder abuse. It can lead to significant financial losses, sometimes exhausting the income of older adults. This can leave them impoverished and even homeless. Adequate access to legal aid is necessary in Maine to protect some of our more vulnerable older adults from this type of abuse.

Having access to legal assistance is critical to Maine's most vulnerable older adults. Legal assistance can help older adults in some of the most important aspects of their life, including housing, economic security, self-determination, protection from abuse and health and safety. In some cases, it may also be a matter of life or death.

We are asking these committees to support a budget that adequately funds Maine's legal services. As stated, we are appreciative of the current proposal however it is simply not adequate for today's reality. For this reason, we urge the committee to add additional funds for legal services that serve some of our most vulnerable Mainers

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. If you have any questions for me, I can be reached at bquinn@arp.org.

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