



# Cumberland County District Attorney's Office

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To: Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary  
From: Carlos Diaz, Assistant District Attorney  
Re: LD 374, "An Act to Provide Comparable Compensation and Benefits for Deputy and Assistant District Attorneys, Assistant Attorney Generals and Public Defenders"  
Date: February 24, 2025 (Public Hearing)

Good morning Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary. My name is Carlos Diaz and I am a prosecutor in Cumberland County. I am here to testify in support of LD 374, a bill that would ensure comparable wages for prosecutors and public defenders.

I am a 9<sup>th</sup> generation Mainer, born in Bangor, raised in Bowdoinham, and now I live in South Portland. I come from a long line of farmers, woodsmen, and public servants dating back to before the American revolution. Proud of my Maine heritage, I have practiced law here for 30 years, including 29 years as either an Assistant Attorney General or an Assistant District Attorney.

When I started working as a prosecutor in Cumberland County in 1994, fresh out of law school, I earned about \$14 per hour, less than current minimum wage. It was a meager income for someone with a graduate degree, but it was enough to just get by, living in a cheap apartment in Portland. That job evolved into a career dedicated to public service, and over three decades my wages slowly increased along the steps of the State employees pay scale. My wife worked as a school teacher, and together our modest incomes were enough to pay our bills, buy a house, and raise our children. There were no extravagances or luxuries, but it was enough to get by. I take great pride in my service to the public and my solemn responsibility as a prosecutor to be a minister of justice, including the duty to protect the rights of the accused even as I try to hold them accountable for their crimes.

However, today I work with many young prosecutors who are disheartened and discouraged by the disparity between our wages and those offered to the emergent Maine public defenders. To put it simply, public defenders are paid more to do less. Maine prosecutors handle caseloads far in excess of any public defender. In my office a typical prosecutor handles between 500 and 700 cases each year, yet I hear of public defenders clamoring for their caseloads to be limited to just 30 cases. Prosecutors also provide other legal services in the public interest, such as advising and training police officers, and handling civil hearings for weapon restriction orders under the yellow-flag law.

For all of this work, we deserve to be paid no less than public defenders. To pay us less is both an injury, financially, and an insult, professionally. Prosecutors who commit their careers to the humble pursuit of public service deserve better. Thank you.