

Administrative Office of the Courts

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Judicial Branch testimony in favor of LD 779, An Act to Fund the Aroostook County Drug Treatment Court and LD 753, An Act to Support an Aroostook Adult Treatment and Recovery Court:

Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn, members of the Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary, my name is Julie Finn and I represent the Judicial Branch. I would like to present testimony and information in support of LD 779 and LD 753, in that both bills support establishing a Treatment Court in Aroostook County.

There is a fairly long history of efforts to create a Treatment Court in Aroostook County. In response to a bill sponsored by former Senate President Troy Jackson, the first stakeholders meeting convened to discuss the feasibility of adding a Treatment Court in the County was held on May 17, 2023, nearly two years ago. Two weeks later, the group met and began work on the Judicial Branch application. This application form was developed by the Judicial Branch to provide guidance and formalization for the development of new Treatment Courts. See Administrative Order, JB-16-01. For a list of the stakeholders who attended at least one meeting, please see the last page of this testimony.

The stakeholders group continued to meet through the summer and fall of 2023, until the application was ready for submission on February 22, 2024. After the Trial Chiefs and other Judicial Branch staff reviewed the application, the following message was relayed to the stakeholders:

... we can offer a provisional approval of the application. In order to gain full approval, the Judicial Branch is requesting detailed information regarding the sources of funding for the various stakeholders. Specifically, you all may intend for the costs outlined in the application to come from a legislative bill with fiscal note, grants, donations, pre-existing employee efforts, or other sources. To ensure transparency about financial expectations, those details are necessary for us to proceed further in our approval.

Many individuals have committed a great deal of time to the discussions around creating a Treatment Court in Aroostook County. The need for it has been demonstrated and not been questioned. The only thing that remains is identifying the funding.

The Judicial Branch thus supports the initiation of this court and does not require financial resources for it. We ask the Committee and the Legislature to consider funding the entities listed in LD 779. One item that the Legislature should consider adding to the bill is funding for the new team in Aroostook County to receive training. There are national standards and protocols to which all of our specialty courts adhere. Our other specialty court teams have received the training and it is considered a best practice to do so.

To the extent that LD 753 directs funding to the Judicial Branch, we are opposed to that aspect of the bill.

Thank you for your time. I would be happy to answer any questions.

Stakeholders represented at (at least some) planning meetings:

Department/Agency	Position	Name
Office of Sen. President Troy Jackson		Carolyn Russo
ME Governor's Office	Director of Opioid Response	Gordon Smith
Aroostook County	District Attorney, District 8	Todd Collins
ME DHHS-SAMHS	SUD Programs Manager	Robert Porter
ME Dept of Corrections	Probation Officer	Adam Pinette
ME Dept of Corrections	Development Coordinator	John Lappin
ME Pretrial Services	Executive Director	Elizabeth Simoni
ME Pretrial Services	Program Case Manager	Darcy Wilcox
Aroostook Mental Health	Program Director of Behavioral Health, Aroostook County	Julia Macek
Aroostook Mental Health	Program Director of Behavioral Health, Washington & Hancock Counties	Clement Deveau
o/b/o MCILS	Defense Attorney, Presque Isle	Adam Swanson
o/b/o MCILS	Defense Attorney, Houlton	Michael Carpenter
o/b/o MCILS	Defense Attorney, Fort Kent	Neil Prendergast
o/b/o MCILS	Defense Attorney, Fort Kent	Toby Jandreau
Maine Re-Entry Network	Executive Director	Bruce Noddin
Maine State Police	Commander, Troop F	Lt. Brian Harris
Aroostook County SO	Sheriff (... - 2023)	Shawn Gillen
Aroostook County SO	Sheriff (2023 - ...)	Peter Johnson
Aroostook County SO	Chief Deputy	Joey Seeley
Aroostook County SO	Community Supervision	Several members
Caribou PD	Chief	Michael Gahagan
Fort Fairfield PD	Chief	Michael Cummings
Fort Kent PD	Chief	Michael DeLena
Houlton PD	Chief	Tim Deluca
Madawaska PD	Chief	Jamie Pelletier
Presque Isle PD	Chief	Laurie Kelly
US Veterans Admin	Veteran Justice Outreach Coord	Danielle Mayer
US Veterans Admin	Veteran Justice Outreach Coord	Amy Morin
ME Judicial Branch	Coordinator, Specialty Dockets	Todd Crawford
ME Judicial Branch	Manager, Criminal Process	Amanda Doherty