

**MAINE PRETRIAL SERVICES, INC.
9 GREEN STREET, SUITE 304
AUGUSTA, MAINE 04330
207-831-6849**

March 10, 2025

Senator Anne M. Carney, Chair
Representative Amy D. Kuhn, Chair
Judiciary Committee
100 State House Station, Room 438
Augusta, ME 04333

RE: LD 779- An Act to Fund the Aroostook County Drug Treatment Court

Dear Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn, and Distinguished Members of the Judiciary Committee:

My name is Elizabeth Simoni. I am writing to you today in support of LD 779, *An Act to Fund the Aroostook County Drug Treatment Court*. I serve as the executive director of Maine Pretrial Services, Inc. (MPS), a private non-profit organization which provides services in thirteen Maine counties. In addition to pretrial screening, pretrial release, community supervision, and case management, MPS also provides case management for each of Maine's treatment recovery courts, including the existing adult criminal courts, the veterans treatment courts, the co-occurring disorders court, and the family recovery courts. MPS has provided services to Maine's drug courts since the first Maine Treatment Court was formed in Cumberland County in 1996. I was fortunate to be in my current role at that time and have been deeply committed to these courts ever since.

Currently, Aroostook County is the only Maine county that does not have at least one treatment recovery court. An Aroostook County Treatment Recovery Court was recommended in an independent, formal evaluation of Maine's adult criminal treatment courts (Recommendation 2, Executive Summary, Public Consulting Group, December 2019). At that time, there were two prosecutorial districts in Maine without treatment recovery courts. Given the demonstrated efficacy of treatment courts in reducing criminal recidivism and assisting individuals with lengthy criminal histories with acute needs for substance use and mental health treatment, having a treatment court in each district is not only equitable, it is best practice in a continuum of solution driven justice interventions.

The system of treatment courts in Maine is well established and the infrastructure exists to add another court. Statewide practice, if replicated in Aroostook County, will assure adherence to the national best practice standards for treatment courts, as promulgated by All Rise (formerly the National Association of Treatment Court Professionals). Treatment Courts, when adherent to national best practice standards, assure reductions in recidivism that far surpass those measured in traditional case processing.

Treatment Courts remain the most researched criminal legal therapeutic intervention globally, and are clear standard bearers for evidence based, research driven practices. As part of its role in Maine's treatment recovery courts, MPS is responsible for capturing all pertinent data points regarding referrals, admissions, case progress, completions, terminations, and more. If a treatment court is opened in Aroostook, MPS will assure regular, thorough data collection to aid in outcome measurement and evaluation.

Reductions in criminal recidivism, improved quality of life, and enhancements to public safety are all hall marks of a high functioning treatment recovery court. The benefits also include demonstrated cost reductions as compared to jail and prison sentences served as results of traditional criminal case processing. In short, treatment courts make good sense for individuals, communities, and criminal legal systems.

If funded, an Aroostook Court will benefit from the deep experience of treatment court practitioners from other Maine jurisdictions, while honoring and uplifting the wisdom and experiences unique to Aroostook County practitioners. The recent multi-disciplinary and highly collaborative efforts of the Aroostook County treatment court planning group chaired by Aroostook County District Attorney Todd Collins and Specialty Dockets and Grants Coordinator Todd Crawford exemplified this strength.

Thank you for your dedication to the State of Maine and thank you for your serious consideration of this important bill.

Respectfully Submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'E. Simoni', written in a cursive style.

Elizabeth Simoni
Executive Director
Maine Pretrial Services, Inc.