



Administrative Office of the Courts

P.O. Box 4820, Portland, Maine 04112-4820

Tel: (207) 822-0792 FAX: (207) 822-0781 TTY: (207) 822-0701

Julia Finn, Esq.
Legislative Analyst

Tel: (207) 822-0767
julia.finn@courts.maine.gov

Judicial Branch testimony neither for nor against LD 1371, An Act to Tie Judicial Salaries to the Average Judicial Salaries of Other New England States:

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 provide some brief testimony neither for nor against LD 1371.

The Maine Judicial Branch has come before you in this biennium and in every budget for the last several years asking that Maine judicial salaries be increased to more accurately reflect the critical importance of the work they do. Maine judicial salaries have historically lagged significantly behind the salaries received by judicial officers in other states. Chief Justice Stanfill spoke about this directly in each of her State of the Judiciary addresses, as have other Chief Justices before her. According to the National Center for State Courts (NCSC), which provides salary information and relative rankings for judicial salaries nationwide, Maine judicial salaries for general jurisdiction courts ranks 51st lowest in the country when adjusted for the cost of living, ahead of only Puerto Rico which ranks 52nd. That fact has remained consistent for several years even after the increase received in the last biennium for which we are grateful. While any attempt to increase judicial salaries is welcome, the dismal ranking of Maine judicial salaries remains troubling. As Justice Stanfill has made clear, the ramifications of those low salaries have implications beyond the judges and extends to all branch employees as salary compression limits potential increases to their wages as well.

LD 1371 proposes to take judicial salaries out of the purview of recommendations made by the State Compensation Commission. The Commission has not met in recent years and the recommendations from the last report were not adopted. Instead, the bill proposes to adjust the salary of judicial officers equal to 80% of the average salary of the "Other New England States," including Connecticut, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, and Vermont. As the attached chart makes clear, judges' salaries from the New England region tend to rank lower than their colleagues from other parts of the country when adjusted for the cost of living. According to NCSC, the salaries for the general jurisdiction trial jurists in New England (including Maine) as of January 1, 2025, are as follows:

Maine	\$161,470
New Hampshire	\$189,365
Vermont	\$194,168
Connecticut	\$201,023
Massachusetts	\$207,855
Rhode Island	\$232,069