



# Administrative Office of the Courts

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## **Judicial Branch testimony neither for nor against LD 1521, An Act to Require All State Agencies to Provide a Zero-based Budget Once Every 10 Years**

Senator Rotundo, Representative Gattine, and members of the Appropriations and Financial Affairs Committee, I am Barbara Cardone, the Director of Legal Affairs and Public Relations for the Judicial Branch. I present testimony neither for nor against LD 1521.

The Judicial Branch understands the duty of the Legislature to oversee the State Budget, and the need for information that this Committee requires to perform that duty. Like the departments in the Executive Branch, we strive to produce any and all information required by the Committee in order to evaluate our new budget initiatives and any existing programs that may come into question. We want to be transparent about our needs and our spending.

In preparation for any budget that we submit to DAFS for inclusion in the Governor's bill, we evaluate the current spending undertaken for each of our programs. We have little to no redundancy in our programs or discretionary spending. We have been consistent in outlining the Judicial Branch needs for resources in each budget submission. Those needs have not wavered. We have supported our requests with data, and independent assessment when appropriate.

We also report regularly to the Legislature. Each year the Chief Justice gives a State of the Judiciary Speech, we publish an annual report, and the State Court Administrator testifies before AFA and the Judiciary Committee regarding our budget needs. Additionally, representatives from several Judicial Branch programs provide reports and testimony to the Legislature annually.

We welcome the opportunity to further discuss Judicial Branch operations and resource needs and regularly invite the Legislature to meet and to attend court proceedings so that we might better convey information about our operations and the challenges we face. The Judicial Branch remains willing to consider what other information might be helpful over and above what is already provided.

However, if the purpose of this bill is to put each program under scrutiny for budget cuts every ten years, it could threaten operational stability and create a challenge to long-range planning and administrative continuity. The uncertainty that we experience with funds from a biennial budget is multiplied by several factors if we risk unanticipated budget cuts from outside the Judicial Branch every ten years.