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Judicial Branch testimony in favor of LD 1994, An Act to Provide Immunity from Civil Liability for Justices of the Peace:

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 in support of Judicial Branch bill, LD 1994.

Justices of the Peace (JPs) assist with non-court hours emergency orders review. This includes Extreme Risk Protection Orders, Involuntary Commitments, Search Warrants, and Arrest Warrants. We have found that some very qualified potential new JPs do not wish to serve if there is a question of liability. In addition, some current JPs, after finding out there was no statutory protection, have voiced a concern about continuing in the role. After looking into this issue, we discovered that all other persons who are appointed to serve as a judicial officer or serve in a quasi-judicial role have statutory immunity (Bail Commissioners, GALs, Mediators, etc.) The JP statute is quite old, and likely the addition of liability was overlooked at the time of drafting. JPs should have the same protection as other judicial officers when acting in that capacity.

Thank you for your time.