

Testimony of Anne Segalini

Good afternoon, Senator Rotundo, Representative Gattine and esteemed members of the Appropriations and Financial Affairs Committee. Good afternoon, Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn, and esteemed members of the Judiciary Committee. Thank you for this opportunity to speak to you and share my story. My name is Anne Segalini, and I live in Kennebec County.

As a survivor of domestic violence, I want to explain how Civil Legal Aid helped my children and me escape years of abuse and rebuild with safety and stability. When I was fighting for our freedom in the face of relentless physical, emotional, legal, financial, and mental torment, Civil Legal Aid did more than help me establish legal boundaries. It gave me back my life, gave my children safety in a stable home, and provided us with a future that years of abuse tried to take away.

After finding the courage to leave, post separation abuse began. My abuser weaponized the legal system, violating protection orders, the divorce decree and dragging me through years of prolonged litigation as a tool of control and an attempt to drain my limited resources. Unlike criminal cases, civil court cases often have no set timelines, allowing them to drag on for years and delaying justice for survivors. Legal Aid secured foundational protections for me and my children and made freedom financially possible, though enforcing those protections remains an ongoing challenge.

Civil Legal Aid changed my life and helped me break the cycle of abuse. The financial burden of legal battles can be overwhelming, especially for survivors who, like me, are isolated and financially dependent on their oppressor. No parent should choose between securing legal protection and providing for their children. Pine Tree Legal Assistance provided the representation needed to challenge that post separation power imbalance in court and helped me rebuild with dignity while creating a better future for my children. Funding civil legal services ensures other families can escape cycles of abuse, achieve independence, and build safer, stronger communities for the future.

I urge you to prioritize funding for civil legal services. Please include **\$3 million in the Fiscal Year 2026–27 supplemental budget**, in addition to the \$1.3 million baseline for the Maine Civil Legal Services Fund, to sustain these services.

Parents and children must know they are not alone and that resources exist to help reclaim their God-given rights to life, liberty, and peace from harm. No Domestic abuse survivor should have to face their abuser alone in a courtroom or continue years of trauma while fighting for legal safety. Civil legal attorneys are heroes who provide the protection and support needed to navigate that court system process, giving families like mine strength and hope to finally move forward into a purposeful life.