

**Testimony of Jeffrey Stanley**  
**before the Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary and the**  
**Appropriations and Financial Affairs Committee**

**In Support of appropriations to the Maine Civil Legal Services Fund**

**February 27, 2026**

Good morning, Senators Rotundo and Carney, Representatives Gattine and Kuhn, and esteemed members of the Appropriations and Financial Affairs Committee and esteemed members of the Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary. My name is Jeffrey Stanley. I live in Arrowsic, and I serve as a Client-Community Board Member for Pine Tree Legal Assistance.

I am here today to urge you to sustain funding for the Maine Civil Legal Services Fund, which allows PTLA and six other non-profit providers of civil legal services to people in need all over Maine.

I don't ask this just as a board member, but as someone who was homeless with a wife and a young child with health issues just a little over a decade ago.

My path to homelessness was pretty sudden. I had worked as a firefighter for nearly 20 years, but had to step away from this job that I loved due to debilitating injuries and PTSD. Just months after losing my ability to work, my wife's company closed and she lost her job. It was a perfect storm and some might say they lost everything, but we still had each other, and it turned out we also had Pine Tree Legal Assistance. Through their help and others, my family found stability. Because of that stability, my daughter is graduating from college this spring with a degree in Political Science. It isn't an exaggeration to say PTLA didn't just provide legal help; they provided my daughter the help we could not provide for her future alone.

After my recovery, I dedicated my life to working with homeless service organizations. My advocacy is informed by the people I see every day. We often use "homelessness" as a catch-all term, but it hides a complex reality:

- There are the Chronically Homeless, often struggling with disabilities or mental health.
- There are the Episodic and Transitional Homeless, often forced into the streets by a single catastrophic event—a job loss or an injury—just like I was.
- And there are the Hidden Homeless, the "couch surfers" who don't show up in official data but are no less vulnerable.

Right now, the number of unsheltered people is growing across Maine. Yet, at the exact moment of crisis, legal services providers' funding is threatened in critical areas like eviction defense and housing rights, among many others. The unhoused still have legal rights and freedoms, but those rights are meaningless if there is no one to protect them.

We are not just asking for "funding"—we are asking for the resources to ensure that the next family facing a catastrophe has the same chance to succeed that mine did.

I urge you to appropriate at least \$3 million to the Maine Civil Legal Services Fund for the upcoming fiscal year in order to prevent a sharp cut in services starting in July and to protect the futures of families like my own. Thank you.