



**State of Maine Judicial Branch**  
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MEMORANDUM

To: Senator Margaret Rotundo  
Representative Drew Gattine  
Joint Standing Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs  
Senator Anne Carney  
Representative Amy Kuhn  
Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary

From: Amy Quinlan, State Court Administrator

Date: February 27, 2026

Re: Testimony of the Maine Judicial Branch regarding the FY2025-2027  
Supplemental Budget Request

Good afternoon, Senator Rotundo and Representative Gattine and Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs, and Senator Carney and Representative Kuhn and Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary.

My name is Amy Quinlan; I am the State Court Administrator for the Maine Judicial Branch. I appreciate the opportunity to discuss the Judicial Branch's FY26 and FY27 Supplemental Budget requests. From the beginning of her term, Chief Justice Valerie Stanfill has emphasized the importance of ensuring that the Maine Judicial Branch (MJB), as the third co-equal branch of government, has adequate resources to fulfill the court's mission of providing fair and timely access to justice to all. The ability to meet the mission depends on three key components: (1) sufficient staffing, (2) reliable and secure technology infrastructure, and (3) safe and accessible courthouses. Thanks to you, we have been making strides in all areas. We are particularly grateful for recent funding received in the last biennium budget to support the MJB's developing technology solutions. In her State of the Judiciary address before the Joint Convention, Chief Justice Stanfill outlined the work underway to shore up existing systems, replace outdated solutions, and implement new technologies to support our work. In short, we are making progress.

**Personal Services**

Our Supplemental requests focus heavily on new positions. While we are grateful for previous support for our technology initiatives, the Judicial Branch received no funding in the last budget cycle for any new positions despite the inclusion of 28 new positions in the Governor's Recommended Budget. Many of these positions are critical to implementing and maintaining an effective technology infrastructure. The Governor's Office has worked with us to include the most critical of those positions in this year's submission. Judicial Branch employees are the backbone of the court system. It should be no surprise that "right-sizing" the Branch remains our number one priority. The chronic understaffing of the court system was affirmed in an

independent study by the National Center for State Courts (NCSC) completed in 2023, which makes plain that the Judicial Branch does not have enough personnel to efficiently handle the workload. For example, the study showed a shortfall of 54 clerks statewide. We have been slowly chipping away at that number. Additionally, creative approaches to staffing, including some of the positions proposed this year, centralize some of the workload, allowing clerks at the courthouse to focus on local needs.

The positions in our supplemental submission fall into three categories: (1) those necessary to support the growing technology infrastructure; (2) marshals to keep courthouses safe and open to the public; (3) and clerks who keep the process moving, assist with court proceedings, and aid those seeking justice.

### All Other Requests

The MJB's All Other requests include the following categories:

- Funding for continuing increases in nondiscretionary services, such as Guardians ad Litem, interpreters, and mental health exams;
- Increased operation costs, such as parking, utilities, postage, travel, and other contractual costs;
- Funding to cover unexpected issues with our facilities in Lincoln and Newport where mold remediation has resulted in significant costs; and
- Increased debt service to align the estimated debt service schedule submitted with LD 2090 with the actual debt service schedule for the 2025A bond. LD 2090 gave the MJB the authority to issue bonds for courthouse construction projects in Hancock, Skowhegan, and Androscoggin Counties.

The Governor's Recommended Budget approaches the MJB's All Other requests in two different ways. A portion of those requests are included as they have been in previous years by providing one-time or ongoing costs as an initiative. The remainder of the All Other requests are addressed in the Recommended Budget by permitting the MJB to use salary savings to cover those costs. To the extent that the Judicial Branch has a balance of Personal Savings appropriations after all salary, benefit, and other obligations are met, the MJB is authorized to transfer up to a certain amount to cover all other costs. **These transfers are not considered adjustments to appropriations and are budget neutral.** We appreciate the flexibility in this approach; however, this is not a long-term solution to cover these escalating and necessary costs. We will need to repeat many of those requests in our next biennium submission.

Turning to the specific initiatives:

#### General Fund (A-83 1<sup>st</sup> initiative)

FY26: Personal Services \$151,455 All Other \$7,095

FY27: Personal Services \$639,257 All Other \$28,380

This initiative provides for the expansion of the centralized review of electronic filings submitted through Maine eCourts—the MJB's new electronic filing and case management system. When attorneys or self-represented litigants electronically file documents into Maine eCourts, those filings are first routed to a queue. There, electronic filing specialists review the submissions to ensure compliance with filing requirements. Filings that meet the necessary criteria are entered into the official court record, while those that do not are returned to the filer, along with guidance on how to correct and resubmit. These documents include both case initiation materials and

subsequent filings throughout the life of a case. In addition to reviewing filings, the electronic filing specialists provide vital phone and email support to users of the eFiling system, assisting with questions and technical issues. The rollout of Maine eCourts will extend to all courts and all case types by the end of 2026/early 2027, and a significant increase in filing volume is expected. To manage this workload effectively and maintain timely processing, the MJB must add six additional electronic filing specialist positions. Centralizing this service alleviates the need for clerks at the local court to constantly monitor the filings, disrupting their ability to address urgent courthouse needs. Without this increase in staffing, court users will face significant delays in having their documents reviewed, accepted, and addressed by the courts; accessing justice; and decreasing court efficiency statewide.

#### General Fund (A-83 2<sup>nd</sup> initiative)

FY27: Personal Services \$893,661 All Other \$60,570

This initiative provides funding to add six assistant clerk positions and three associate clerk positions to expand the Judicial Branch Service Center. The additional positions will allow the Service Center to expand services to all trial courts in the three regions not yet covered. Currently, the Service Center handles incoming public telephone calls for trial courts in five of the eight court regions. This centralized service efficiently delivers high-quality public assistance by providing clear, accurate, consistent, and timely responses to inquiries. At the same time, it frees court clerks to focus on critical local responsibilities. With the planned Maine eCourts rollout throughout the next year, the three remaining court regions will begin receiving calls that require support. To ensure seamless service and maintain the quality of public response, this initiative funds the necessary additional staff positions, equipment, and software required to extend Service Center call answering to these regions. Expanding the Service Center's reach will enhance public access to court information and improve operational efficiency across all trial courts.

#### General Fund (A-83 3<sup>rd</sup> initiative)

FY26: Personal Services \$36,761 All Other \$1,260

FY27: Personal Services \$154,896 All Other \$5,050

This initiative provides funding for one new IT security analyst position. The MJB does not currently have a position dedicated to cybersecurity in its ranks. When the new paperless court record is fully implemented, IT security will become even more important. Hiring a full-time dedicated security position to analyze, plan, test, and develop action plans on an ongoing basis is crucial to responsibly sustain the MJB's technology infrastructure. Cybersecurity is an ever-growing threat, and the MJB must do all we can to prevent, but also prepare for, an attack. This is particularly true given the important and sensitive information that flows through and is maintained by the MJB.

#### General Fund (A-83 4<sup>th</sup> initiative)

FY26: All Other \$135,000

FY27: All Other \$135,000

This initiative provides one-time funding for increased transcript costs due to the Maine Commission on Public Defense Services' (MCPDS) pronouncement in August 2025 that it could not cover these costs in civil commitment and WRO cases. Because these cases must proceed and transcripts are essential to doing so, the MJB had no choice but to cover these costs despite the lack of funding.

General Fund (A-83 6<sup>th</sup> initiative)

FY26: All Other \$91,000

FY27: All Other \$91,000

This budget initiative requests additional ongoing funding to cover rising insurance premiums, which have increased due to both market-wide cost escalations and the MJB's expanded operational footprint. As new sites have come online, the total insured value of assets has grown, resulting in higher premium assessments. The Judicial Branch's existing insurance budget is no longer sufficient to meet current premium obligations without drawing on other operational funds. Increasing the insurance budget will ensure adequate and uninterrupted coverage across all properties and activities and maintain compliance with risk management requirements.

General Fund (A-83 7<sup>th</sup> initiative)

FY26: All Other \$1,200,000

FY27: All Other \$1,200,000

This initiative is similar to the fourth initiative on page A-83. It provides one-time funding to pay for counsel appointed in weapons restriction order (WRO) cases and civil commitment cases. In August 2025, the MJB was notified by MCPDS that they would stop paying attorney's fees in these case types and directed counsel to submit their invoices to the Judicial Branch for payment for all appointments made on or after September 1, 2025. The Court does not have funding to support these costs. Setting aside the question of who should most appropriately handle payment of fees for these cases, the Court has endeavored to pay because to fail to do so would leave citizens without critical legal services in these important cases. The Court seeks one-time funding to reimburse these fees until an appropriate legislative determination can be made as to the allocation of responsibility to appoint and pay for counsel.

General Fund (A-83 8<sup>th</sup> initiative)

FY27: Personal Services \$193,076 All Other \$3,000

This initiative provides funding for two new assistant clerk positions. The MJB continues to work towards adding more clerk positions to adequately staff clerks' offices throughout the State. The Judicial Branch has attempted to fill gaps by utilizing temporary staffing with limited results. This is largely because it takes months to fully onboard a clerk position given the complexities of the role. Assistant clerks docket and process matters filed before the court. They schedule pre-trial activities, trials, motions, and other proceedings. They manage trailing dockets and trial lists. Assistant clerks also process fines, fees, and other funds coming to the courts, maintaining accounts as necessary. They work closely with judges/justices; attorneys; members of the public; and state, local, county, and federal agencies concerning matters before the court. Staff are now tasked with an increasing number of duties both regulatory and technological in nature, such as the introduction of remote hearings. The strain on existing employees due to insufficient staffing has led to burnout and contributed to turnover rates, all of which affects the efficiency of the judicial system.

General Fund (A-84 1<sup>st</sup> initiative)

FY27: Personal Services \$314,517 All Other \$6,570

This initiative provides funding for three new deputy marshal positions. Additional positions are necessary to provide critical entry screening to keep all courthouse locations open to the public and to ensure that all who visit and work within courthouse facilities are safe. These positions are critical to the effective operation of the Judicial Branch. Due to staffing shortages, we have,

at times, been forced to close courthouses and courtrooms when there were not enough marshals available to provide adequate coverage.

General Fund (A-84 6<sup>th</sup> initiative)

FY26: Personal Services \$217,916 All Other \$83,175

FY27: Personal Services \$896,951 All Other \$81,860

The Judicial Branch seeks funding to ensure the effective implementation of the Extreme Risk Protection Order Act passed by Maine citizens. This new "red flag" law establishes a time-sensitive judicial process that allows certain family and household members, a law enforcement officer, or a law enforcement agency to petition the court for an order prohibiting an individual from purchasing, possessing, receiving, or having control of a dangerous weapon. To meet the anticipated increase in workload, the request includes funding for two district court judge positions, two marshal positions, and two assistant clerk positions. These resources are necessary to support expedited hearings, courtroom security, case processing, and coordination with law enforcement agencies. One-time technology funding is also requested for significant programing changes to MEJIS and Maine eCourts. The system updates are necessary to meet statutory reporting requirements and to integrate with law enforcement databases.

Judicial – Debt Service (A-84 7<sup>th</sup> initiative)

FY26: All Other \$1,944,265

FY27: All Other \$4,098,013

This initiative seeks to align the estimated debt service schedule submitted with LD 2090 with the actual debt service schedule for the 2025A bond. The original plan was to issue three bonds: \$55M in June 2025 for Hancock, \$45M in 2026 for Somerset, and \$105M in 2027 for Androscoggin. Due to inflation concerns, the schedule was condensed to Hancock and Somerset projects starting in 2025 and Androscoggin in 2026, resulting in a \$150M bond being issued in August 2025.

**All Other Requests Included in the Governor’s Recommended Budget Language Sections**

As I noted, several of our All Other requests have been included in language in the Governor’s Recommended Budget. These sections provide the MJB with the flexibility to transfer available Personal Services to All Other to cover costs in three distinct areas: (1) court services, (2) increasing operational costs, and (3) costs associated with unexpected building remediation issues. **Because these items transfer available funding between lines, they are budget neutral and are not considered adjustments to appropriations.**

PART HHH, SEC. FF-1 and FF-2

This language amends the authority provided in the last Biennium Budget to allow the Judicial Branch to transfer available Personal Services to All Other to cover volume increases for Guardians ad Litem, interpreters, and mental health exams, as well as temporary clerk services and marshal services contracts. The language increases the amount that the Judicial Branch may transfer in FY26 and FY27 from \$750,000 to \$1,250,000 in each year. Guardians ad Litem, interpreters, and mental health exams are not discretionary but are mandated by statute and continue to rise. Funding for temporary clerk services and marshal contracts is necessary to cover the use of contractual services where there is a shortage of staffing.

PART III, SEC. III-1

This language authorizes the Judicial Branch to transfer Personal Services to the All Other line, up to \$1,248,415 for FY26 and up to \$1,152,310 for FY27, to fund many increasing operational costs, including the following:

- iPad replacements and licensing used to assist individuals with hearing deficits to connect with on-demand ASL interpreters and access other remote interpreter services for court events;
- Costs associated with replacing the records management system used by the judicial marshals to track entry screening, incident reports, and threat management for the MJB;
- Rising utility costs;
- Rising parking costs in multiple locations for jurors and staff;
- Escalating interpreter costs for spoken language and American Sign Language (ASL) interpreter services to court users. All limited English proficient (LEP) individuals who are parties or witnesses in any type of court case and parents of minors involved in juvenile actions are statutorily mandated to be provided with an interpreter in all court proceedings;
- Costs associated with the implementation of a new case management system;
- Rising postage costs; and
- Increasing travel costs for staff and judicial officers.

#### PART III, SEC. III-2

This language permits the MJB to transfer available Personal Services balances, up to \$223,000 for FY26 and up to \$68,000 for FY27, to All Other lines to cover general facility improvements, increased lease costs, additional file storage, and mold remediation at the Lincoln and Newport District Court locations.

Thank you for your time and attention today. I am happy to try to answer any questions you may have now or at the work session.

Maine Judicial Branch FY2025-2027 Supplemental Budget Request  
Reclassifications and Reorganizations

General Fund (A-83 5<sup>th</sup> initiative)

FY27: Personal Services \$4,846

Reorganization

This budget initiative seeks funding to support the reorganization of the internal case processing lead position to reflect the increased scope, complexity, and level of responsibility currently required of the role. The position has evolved beyond routine administrative tasks and now plays a critical function in supporting the implementation of best practices across internal case processing, including system training, workflow improvement, and procedural development. The reorganization of the internal case processing lead is critical to ensuring continued operational efficiency, staff support, and the consistent application of case processing standards. The enhanced responsibilities of this role warrant recognition through formal reorganization.

General Fund (A-84 2nd initiative)

FY26: Personal Services \$25,684

FY27: Personal Services \$15,047

Reclassification

This initiative provides funding for the reclass of the director of state judicial marshals from PG 22 to PG 23. This position serves as the subject matter expert on, and is responsible for, all safety and security issues for employees and the public visiting courthouses and facilities statewide. Due to increasing local, state, and national threats to the judicial system, the director's role has expanded and become a vital part of court leadership as the MJB prioritizes safety for our employees and the public. Further, due to the increased threats, this position is expected to respond to these incidents on a 24/7 basis. The necessity and need of increased experience within the field of law enforcement and training have also become a standard of expectation with this position that was not as prevalent when first established.

General Fund (A-84 3rd initiative)

FY27: Personal Service \$7,341

Reorganization

This initiative requests funding to support the reorganization of one division supervisor II position to a division supervisor III. This reorganization aligns with the position's increased scope of responsibility, supervisory demands, and operational complexity within the clerk's office. This increased scale of responsibility justifies the transition to the higher classification and corresponding salary range. The position oversees one of three consolidated divisions within the superior court/district court clerk's office—criminal, civil, or family. The division supervisor is responsible for all facets of division operations, including but not limited to, operational planning, caseload management, employee training and supervision, conflict resolution, and ensuring high levels of customer service for internal and external stakeholders. Reporting directly to the clerk of court, the division supervisor is also tasked with unifying the superior and district court caseloads, as appropriate. This includes managing the integration of two previously separate staff teams and fostering collaboration through effective leadership. The incumbent also acts as the clerk of court in the latter's absence. The incumbent now supervises

12 or more staff members and is responsible for a significantly higher volume of cases, trials, and coordination with judges and attorneys.

General Fund (A-84 4th initiative)

FY27: Personal Services \$12,139

Reorganization

This initiative provides funding to support the approved reorganization of the supervisor law clerk position to a manager of trial court law clerks position. The position has changed significantly since inception. The position's supervisory duties have expanded to include oversight for all trial court law clerks, in addition to acting as the Judicial Branch's designee on various committees and task forces. Additionally, the position advises the JB's legislative advisory committee and the trial chiefs on various legislative and policy matters.

General Fund (A-84 5th initiative)

FY27: Personal Services \$8,992

Reorganization

This initiative provides funding for the approved reorganization of two accounting clerk I positions. The responsibilities and scope of work associated with these positions have significantly evolved over time, and they now consistently perform duties that exceed the expectations of their current classification. They are essential in maintaining the accuracy and integrity of financial operations and ensuring compliance with state and federal regulations. The reorganization accurately reflects the current duties and responsibilities of the incumbents, aligns compensation with the level of work performed, and helps address retention and recruitment challenges. Funding this reorganization is a necessary step to support a sustainable, well-functioning fiscal team.