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February 6, 2025

Senator Anne Carney, Chair
Representative Amy Kuhn, Chair
Committee on Judiciary
100 State House Station, Room 438
Augusta, ME 04330

RE: LD 338 – An Act to Increase the Size and Balance of Jury Pools

Dear Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn, and Members of the Committee on Judiciary,

MACDL supports LD 338, *An Act to Increase the Size and Balance of Jury Pools*.

LD 338 represents a critical step toward ensuring a more inclusive, fair, and representative judicial system in Maine. The right to a trial by jury is a fundamental pillar of our democracy, and the composition of jury pools plays a significant role in maintaining public confidence in the fairness and impartiality of our legal system.

Currently, jury pools in Maine are primarily drawn from voter registration and driver's license records, which may not fully reflect the diversity of the state's population. By broadening the sources used to compile jury lists to include recipients of public assistance benefits, state unemployment compensation, and individuals receiving state income tax forms, LD 338 ensures that jury pools more accurately represent the entire community. This expansion is essential to achieving a jury system that is not only larger but also more balanced and inclusive.

A diverse and representative jury pool enhances fairness in our courts. Larger jury pools bring a wider range of perspectives, reducing the risk of bias and improving the quality of deliberations. When juries reflect the communities they serve, defendants, victims, and the public at large are more likely to trust the legitimacy of the judicial process.

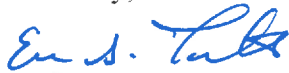
Jury service is a fundamental civic duty, and expanding the jury pool allows more citizens to participate in the justice system. LD 338 promotes greater civic engagement by ensuring that individuals from all socioeconomic backgrounds have an equal opportunity to serve. It helps eliminate systemic barriers that have historically excluded certain groups, particularly those with lower incomes who may not be captured under current jury selection criteria.

Maine has faced challenges in securing sufficiently large and diverse jury pools, which can lead to delays in court proceedings and, in some cases, difficulties in empaneling fair juries. By increasing the pool size, LD 338 helps to prevent these issues, improving efficiency in the court system while upholding the constitutional right to a trial by a jury of one's peers.

Ensuring an equitable judicial process should be a top priority for Maine's legislature. LD 338 is a commonsense reform that promotes fairness, strengthens public confidence in the courts, and enhances civic participation. By supporting this bill, Maine can take a meaningful step toward a justice system that truly reflects the communities it serves.

For these reasons, MACDL urges you to support LD 338 and take action to create a more inclusive, effective, and just legal system for all Mainers.

Sincerely,



Eric S. Thistle, Esq.
MACDL Member