

**Testimony in support of LD 425
to the Judiciary Committee**

February 24, 2025

Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn, and distinguished members of the Committee:

My name is Sarah Johnson and I am a resident of Sanford.

I am writing in support of LD 425, An Act to Establish a Conviction Integrity Unit in the Attorney General's Office.

On both human and economic levels, this bill is good for Maine. The cost of a wrongful conviction in dollars may be measurable, but the cost in human devastation is not. Imagine the severe psychological stress you would endure from a wrongful conviction. Loss of employment, housing, family and community relationships, and possibly imprisonment. What would be required for you to gain your reputation and the trust of others back? Would you ever be able to trust and participate in the justice system?

A wrongful conviction also harms victim(s) who may have been traumatized by the process simply for its lack of integrity, then must endure this trauma again if another investigation is required.

Having a Conviction Integrity Unit established in Maine should make us all proud.

It will improve Maine's justice system by identifying issues, and increase community trust.

This bill includes key points of required evidence and investigation by the CIU, and most important it includes oversight. A report requiring all activities and details of each application submitted for review must be submitted yearly to the Judiciary Committee. I would hope this would be a public document for all Mainers to review.

From the bill summary: "The purpose of the Conviction Integrity Unit is to review convictions to determine whether there is clear and convincing evidence of actual innocence." This protects all of us.

I hope you will support this bill.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sarah Johnson

Sanford, Maine.