

# Paul D. Corey & ASSOCIATES PA

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RE: LD 2059

To Whom it May Concern,

I write regarding the projected PDS funding shortfall. I have 15 years of experience handling court appointed criminal cases. In 2023 I formed Paul D. Corey & Associates PA in Lewiston in an effort bring more attorneys into the defense bar. It has been a success. My firm now has six full-time attorneys handling court appointed criminal cases. Three of the attorneys graduated law school in 2024, and all three attended law schools outside of Maine. The hourly rate increase to \$150/hr. enables small firms to hire associate attorneys to do court appointed cases, provide them with competitive, livable salaries, full benefits, a real law office with staff, conference rooms and professional support.

As you know, many criminal dockets around our State have lists of defendants eligible for court appointed counsel for whom no attorneys are available. The lists are commonly referred to as "6<sup>th</sup> Amendment lists." ADA Andrew Matulis handles the 6<sup>th</sup> Am. List in Lewiston for the DA's Office. I recently inquired with him if it is true that the list is shrinking. ADA Matulis told me in email correspondence that "big picture, we are trending in the right direction in ensuring that the 6<sup>th</sup> Amendment is upheld." He added, "frankly, I credit a lot of it to you and your firm."

A judge recently told me that he refers to my firm as "the second PD office." Firms like mine are the future of indigent defense. The tens of thousands of annual criminal case filings cannot be handled by solo practitioners alone, nor can they be handled by PD offices alone. It requires a tripartite approach of PD offices, solo practitioners and small law firms like mine.

My current office space can accommodate ten lawyers, and at our current growth my firm would be at ten lawyers by June 2026. With the addition of four more lawyers, I am confident that my firm, in conjunction with the PD office and solo practitioners, will handle all of the indigent caseload in Androscoggin County and possibly the entirety of District 3. However, the projected funding shortfall means a hiring freeze and possible termination of my firm. If I close my doors, the young lawyers in my firm that are diligently handling court appointed cases will be let go, hired elsewhere in the private sector and highly unlikely to ever return to court appointed work out of mistrust of the system.

Maine is at a crossroads with its 6<sup>th</sup> Amendment obligation. We will either accelerate the progress that we have seen, or we will reverse the progress. I respectfully ask that PDS be fully funded before it runs out of money.

Sincerely,

/s/ Paul Corey

Paul D. Corey, Esq.