

Testimony in support of LD 2059

To the Judiciary Committee

January 20, 2026

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 2059, An Act to Provide Required Funding for the Reimbursement of Assigned Counsel and to Develop the Public Defender Office for Cumberland County.

Public defense is a constitutional mandate, an ethical imperative, and a requirement for the movement towards “justice for all” that we so often pledge. Passing LD 2059 will be an effort to continue to address the systemic failures of Maine’s indigent legal services.

I struggle for words in this testimony so I will rely on the leaders in this fight for equity and constitutional rights for indigent people in Maine, the [ACLU](#):

“ When the state chooses to charge a person with a crime, it is the state's responsibility to provide adequate legal counsel to those who cannot afford an attorney – **because**

a person's freedom should never depend on their wealth.

Charging people with a crime and then denying their right to counsel undermines the fundamental principle that all people are innocent until proven guilty.

People often cannot navigate the complicated criminal legal system without an attorney. This can leave people helpless when they might otherwise have an attorney advocating for lower bail, conditions for release, and preparing their defense.

Even under the best of circumstances, people in jails have limited or no access to necessary services such as medical care, mental health care, and substance use disorder treatment.

Incarceration can also cause people to lose their jobs and lose contact with their families. These dire consequences can be made even worse when people do not have access to effective assistance of counsel.”¹

I hope for a unanimous “Ought To Pass” on LD 2059

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sarah Johnson, Sanford ME

<https://www.aclumaine.org/mainesgrowingcrisis/>

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