

TO: The Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary

RE: LD 2126, An Act to Eliminate the Juvenile Crime of Willful Refusal to Pay a Fine or Comply with the Terms of a Court Order

Public Hearing Date: January 22, 2026

Dear Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary,

My name is Jill Ward, and I am a resident of Portland, Maine. I have worked on juvenile justice policy and reform for more than 20 years both nationally and here in Maine. Most recently, I served as a Senior Policy Advisor to the Administrator at the U.S. Department of Justice's Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention. Currently, I direct the Maine Center for Youth Policy at Maine Law and in that work facilitate a practitioner work group that was involved in LD 1849, legislation that brought all Title 12 and Title 29-A crimes into the Juvenile Code. My testimony in support of LD 2126 represents my own views and not the position of the University of Maine School of Law or the University of Maine System.

Last year, LD 1849, *An Act to Establish a Minimum Age at Which Conduct Constitutes a Juvenile Crime and to Confer Jurisdiction to the Juvenile Courts Over Any Criminal Offense Under Maine Law Committed by a Juvenile* was enacted, in part, to improve efficiency and consistency in the court process by ensuring that all criminal offenses committed by a juvenile would originate in Juvenile Court. After the bill was enacted, it was discovered that a provision around the failure to pay a fine or comply with a court order that should have been deleted to complete this transition was not removed. The oversight has created an unintended inconsistency in the treatment of juvenile and adults. LD 2126 would remedy this drafting error and I encourage the Committee to support it.

Respectfully submitted,



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