February 4, 2020

Sen. Michael Carpenter, Chair
Rep. Donna Bailey, Chair
Joint Judiciary Committee
Maine State Legislature
5 State House Station
Augusta, ME  04333

Re: LD 1859, An Act To Increase Access to Justice and Maine’s Rural Lawyer Workforce by Expanding Student Attorney Practice Opportunities

Dear Sen. Carpenter, Rep. Bailey, and Members of the Judiciary Committee:

We write today to express the support of the Maine State Bar Association for LD 1859, which bill would provide expanded opportunities for law students to appear in court, including to assist indigent Mainers.

Briefly, the Maine State Bar Association is a statewide trade association chartered in 1891 by the Maine Legislature. The Association currently represents approximately 3000 attorneys in the State in both public service and private practice. The Association maintains 27 separate sections covering nearly every field of law practiced in Maine, from Administrative Law to Workers’ Compensation Law.

Turning to the bill itself, it would expand opportunities for law students with 3 semesters of legal education at an accredited law school to appear in court for the State, a State agency, or under the supervision of a provider of indigent legal services. This modifies current practice, which requires at least 4 semesters of education in order to engage in these activities.

We see three key benefits for this modification, which align closely with the mission of the Maine State Bar Association:

1. **Improve the quality of legal services.** The bill provides expanded opportunities to educate and train law students, which helps law students get more practical experience.
2. **Access to Justice.** Allowing more law students to provide legal support for the State and indigent Mainers, more Maine people will be able to access and navigate Maine’s court system.
3. **Offset the “grey ing” of the Maine Bar.** As Maine’s legal community gets progressively older, on average, it is important to provide opportunities for newer lawyers to get trained and enter the profession.
Conclusion. For the reasons noted above, the Maine State Bar Association respectfully asks this Committee to support LD 1859. Thank you, and we would be pleased to answer any questions you may have.

Sincerely,

Thaddeus Day, President
Board of Governors