March 27, 2019

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

Re: **LD 781, An Act To Increase Judicial Compensation**

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

On behalf of the Maine State Bar Association, we write in support of **LD 781, An Act To Increase Judicial Compensation**.

Briefly, the Maine State Bar Association is a statewide professional and public service organization. The Association is made up of more than 3,000 members, who are lawyers licensed to practice in Maine. The Maine State Bar Association works to promote its members’ professionalism and advance their skills and knowledge, helping them meet the legal needs of all Maine people, and to advance Maine’s system of justice.

With regard to Maine’s Judicial system, the Maine State Bar Association very much understands that justice depends on the quality and skills of our judges. For this reason, the Association works hard to review judges who have been renominated to the bench, and we provide our recommendations to the Legislature as part of the re-nomination process. Overall, we believe Maine has very competent and talented individuals serving in our court system.

Currently, Maine’s compensation for judges is among the lowest in the nation, and we need to ensure that low compensation does not contribute to a future decline in the quality of judges that join the bench. In this regard, LD 781 aligns with our Association’s interest in maintaining quality judges. By proposing to increase pay for judges, LD 781 provides an opportunity to increase the pool of individuals willing to serve on the bench, which in turn increases the likelihood that quality candidates will be available for nomination.

LD 781 is concept draft, and it does not propose a particular level of compensation. Nor does the Association have specific guidance regarding the appropriate level of compensation. That said, we want to go on record supporting the concept of higher pay for our judges, and we hope that the Legislature will support this step.

We appreciate the opportunity to provide testimony on this matter, and if we can provide additional information to assist either Committee, please do not hesitate to let us know.

Sincerely,

Eric N. Columber, President  
Board of Governors

---

1 Members of the Board with spouses or family members within the Judiciary recused themselves from this issue.