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**STATE OF MAINE
ONE HUNDRED AND TWENTY-NINTH LEGISLATURE
COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY**

January 6, 2020

Hon. Justin Chenette, Senate Chair
Hon. Anne-Marie Mastraccio, House Chair
Government Oversight Committee
Office of Program Evaluation and Government Accountability
82 State House Station
Augusta, Maine 04333-0082

Re: Review of Maine Commission on Indigent Legal Services

Dear Senator Chenette and Representative Mastraccio:

Thank you for keeping us apprised of the Office of Program Evaluation and Government Accountability (OPEGA) review of the Maine Commission on Indigent Legal Services (MCILS). The newly-restructured Commission is also undertaking a comprehensive review, and we believe some of the Commission's efforts will overlap with the Government Oversight Committee's focus. We understand that the current OPEGA work plan projects a full report being completed as long as a year from now, and the work will not be able to provide information to the Second Session of the 129th Legislature as we address the many issues raised in the Sixth Amendment Center's report.

The MCILS has indicated to us that OPEGA's work would most likely be very helpful to the examination and evaluation being conducted by MCILS and its four subcommittees. The Judiciary Committee will also be addressing the findings and recommendations of the Sixth Amendment Center, and we know we will also benefit from OPEGA's analysis. As Chairs of the Judiciary Committee, we respectfully ask that the Government Oversight Committee reconsider the priority given to the MCILS with the understanding that the sooner deficiencies, flaws and possible improvements can be identified, the sooner MCILS and the Legislature can act to put the needed reforms in place.

We appreciate the significant workload to which the GOC has already committed resources, so we do not make this request lightly. We do believe, however, that the imperative nature of the State's obligation to provide indigent legal services directs us to undertake our work immediately; and we believe that the benefits of OPEGA's focus sooner rather than later will greatly enhance our ability to make significant and long-lasting changes.

We would be very happy to talk with you about this request at your convenience.

Sincerely,

Handwritten signature of Mike Carpenter in black ink.

Mike Carpenter, Senate Chair

Handwritten signature of Donna Bailey in black ink.

Donna Bailey, House Chair