



Administrative Office of the Courts

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MEMORANDUM

To: Senator Cathy Breen
Representative Teresa Pierce
Joint Standing Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs
Senator Anne Carney
Representative Thom Harnett
Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary

From: Dennis Corliss, Chief of Finance and Administration

Date: March 1, 2021

Re: Testimony of the Maine Judicial Branch on L.D 221, the Biennial Budget

My name is Dennis Corliss; I am the Chief of Finance and Administration for the Judicial Branch. I appreciate the opportunity to come before you today to discuss the Judicial Branch budget and the new initiatives. Before getting into the various individual initiatives, I want to put the Judicial Branch budget into perspective for you.

We have limited our requests to items such as facility operations in our 38 facilities with no provision for inflation costs, requests for unforeseen information technology costs and the continuance of limited period positions. While we requested funding for additional guardian ad litem costs, these costs have stabilized since the request was made, and we ask that the initiative be removed.

Page A-358, #1: Other Special Revenue

This first initiative on the page continues 3 limited period Law Clerk positions.

Page A-358, #2: Other Special Revenue

This next initiative continues 1 limited-period Violations Bureau Assistant Clerk position.

Page A-358, #3: General Fund

As mentioned earlier, this request was for Guardian Ad Litem and was based on trends this past fall that have since stabilized. We request that this initiative be removed.

Page A-359, #1: General Fund

Provides funding for facility operation cost increases, including utilities, plowing, heat and rent in many of the 38 court locations around the state.

Page A-359, #2: Other Special Revenue

Continues 1 limited period Facility Engineer position. As we have moved from county owned courthouses to state owned and operated facilities, we have had to increase staff in this area.

Page A-359, #3: Federal Fund

Continues 1 federally funded positions dedicated to child protection matters. If those funds are received, this will authorize the use of that money for this position.

Page A-359, #4: Other Special Revenue

Continues 2 limited period collection clerks and 1 court fine screener. We are authorized by statute to use a portion of funds collected to assist in the collection efforts. These positions provide additional notice to those who forgot to pay fines, and additional hearings for those who allege they cannot pay their fines. The collection clerks assist the clerk's office in providing notice and the opportunity to be heard when a defendant has failed or forgotten to pay their fine.

Page A-359, #5: Other Special Revenue

Continues 2 limited-period Service Center/Violations Bureau Assistant Clerk positions.

Page A-359, #6: General Fund

Provides funding for remote video technology for mediators and mediations and funding for anti-virus software for MACS that had previously been provided by Microsoft at no cost.

Page A-359, #7: Federal Fund

Continues 2 limited period Court Appointed Special Advocate Legal Services Advisor positions. These positions supervise volunteers that have saved the state about \$400,000 in Guardians Ad Litem expenses per year.

Page A-360, #5: General Fund - Debt Service

Funding is reduced on a one-time basis to reflect savings achieved by the refinancing of 2011 debt issuances.

LANGUAGE

PART P – Page P-2 in Part P, Pages 19 & 20 in Language:
Attrition is increased from 1.6% to 5% for the Judicial Branch.

PART III – Page 46

There is a language item for an increase in judicial salaries. As of January 2021, adjusted for cost of living, Maine trial judges are 51st in the nation. This 3% increase is already in the base budget. With this increase over the next two years, and even if other states do not increase salaries for two years, our judges will remain at the bottom of the list after the other 50 states and the District of Columbia. This increase attempts to not widen the gap with the other states as we work to bring our judges to an appropriate salary for their critically important work.

Thank you for your time and consideration here today. I am happy to try to answer any questions you may have either now or at the work session.