



Maine Trial Lawyers Association

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Maine Trial Lawyers Association Organization Description for Judiciary Committee

The Maine Trial Lawyers Association, founded in 1963, is a professional trade association supported by dues and contributions of about 600 individual attorneys across Maine. Our organization is a state affiliate of the American Association for Justice. According to our Mission Statement, the Maine Trial Lawyers Association seeks to promote and preserve the civil justice system, to preserve the right to trial by jury, to champion the cause of those who deserve redress for injury to person or property, to promote excellence in trial advocacy through training and education, to promote civility and professionalism in the bar, to influence and promote legislation consistent with our mission, to support an independent and impartial judiciary, and to uphold the honor and dignity of the legal profession and the highest standards of ethical conduct and integrity.

We usually appear before this committee for two purposes: (1) to testify either for or against legislation that impacts access to our civil justice system and (2) provide testimony concerning judicial nominations. Before judicial confirmation hearings, we survey our membership as to a nominee's judicial experience and temperament. Our executive committee or board of governors review these surveys and add their input as well. Our testimony as to nominees reflects a synthesis of that process.

As has almost every other facet of Maine's court system, the civil justice system has been deeply affected by the COVID crises. We have worked successfully with the judicial system to encourage only hearings and depositions in the civil sector. However, civil trials remain stymied and will likely remain stymied even post-COVID as the court system attempts to clear a backlog of criminal and family court matters. This backlog leaves thousands of individuals and businesses in limbo as they wait for their disputes to settle. Our association will be supporting legislation that we hope will make it easier for some civil cases to settle before trial. The Maine Trial Lawyers Association also will advocate for additional resources for the court system, particularly for court staff such as marshals, to help the court system efficiently clear the backlogs in a post-COVID world.

Our association can be a resource for this committee, even in areas outside of civil practice. Our members' practices run the full spectrum. If you have a policy consideration and wish to understand how it might impact our justice system, I encourage you to get in touch with our association. We will endeavor to connect you with a lawyer "on the ground" to understand the implications of the decisions you must make.

Thank you for this opportunity to talk with the committee today. In our written materials, we have included contact information for our association should you need us. While we hope you will agree with our legislative advocacy, we also hope you will view us as a resource even outside of those advocacy efforts.

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