



**PRESS RELEASE**  
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Contact: Mallory Trachtenberg  
[mtrachtenberg@usccr.gov](mailto:mtrachtenberg@usccr.gov)

**Maine Advisory Committee to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights Issues**  
**Addendum to Report: *The Right to Criminal Legal Defense in Maine***

The Maine Advisory Committee to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights has released a [report addendum](#) following their [November report](#) on the right to criminal legal defense in Maine. Despite increased public attention to Maine's lack of public defenders since the Committee first took testimony on this issue in 2022, Maine has not provided a system of fully funded public defense that meets the current need. With this in mind, the Committee is releasing an addendum to highlight the barriers that currently exist to fully funding a system for indigent public defense in Maine.

The Committee received testimony in December 2023 from State Senator and Chair of the Legislature's Judiciary Committee, Anne Carney, and Maine Commission on Public Defense Services (formerly, the Maine Commission on Indigent Legal Services, or, MCILS) Executive Director Jim Billings.

The Committee was encouraged by Senator Carney's and Executive Director Billings' testimony on recent legislative proposals and potential pathways towards fully funding a system of public defense. Based on the testimony received, the Committee recommends that the Maine Legislature allocate and Governor Mills ensure sustainable, long-term funding for building a system for public defense in Maine that is in line with the proposed plan by MCILS, and urges all involved parties to continue building the capacity of Maine's public defense offices.

Committee Chair Samantha Le said, "The Maine Advisory Committee to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights is grateful to Senator Anne Carney and Executive Director Jim Billings for sharing their perspectives on the current barriers to fully funding a system of public defense. We hope that our recommendations will encourage Maine to invest in building a sustainable and equitable system of public defense in Maine. We are hopeful for meaningful change in Maine's indigent legal services, and are keeping an eye on the Legislative response on this issue."

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The U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, established by the Civil Rights Act of 1957, is the only independent, bipartisan agency charged with advising the President and Congress on civil rights and reporting annually on federal civil rights enforcement. Our 51 state Advisory Committees offer a broad perspective on civil rights concerns at state and local levels. The Commission: in our 7th decade, a continuing legacy of influence in civil rights. For information about the Commission, please visit [www.usccr.gov](http://www.usccr.gov) and follow us on [X](#) and [Facebook](#).