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Matthew Pollack, Executive Clerk
Maine Supreme Judicial Court
205 Newbury Street, Room 139
Portland, Maine 04101

In re: Task Force on Transparency and Privacy in Court Records

Mr. Pollack:

Please accept the following responses to other comments on the TAP report. I noticed that the bulk of the comments on the report shared my concerns about the insufficient access to the public records at issue here, although a few supported the task force's proposal and considered it an admirable compromise between transparency and privacy. I think the proposal's supporters are ignoring the logistical difficulties involved in travel to courthouses for most Mainers and even some lawyers.

While I am fortunate enough to live and work in Bangor, which has a state courthouse, there are many lawyers in small towns that are not conveniently located near any court. For example, a search on the Internet shows that Greenville currently has two law offices, which are about forty-five minutes from the courthouse in Dover-Foxcroft. According to the Board of Overseers of the Bar records, several lawyers are based in Blue Hill, about a twenty-minute drive to and from Ellsworth; and a few are based in Standish, a thirty- or forty-five-minute drive to downtown Portland. This is an opportunity to help these and other similarly situated practitioners to reduce unnecessary travel.

Furthermore, Maine ranks 40th among all states for population density and has extremely limited public transit systems; it is inevitable that a significant part of the populace lives a significant distance from any courthouse. Maine has an unprecedented opportunity to expand its residents' access to legal records, and publishing docket sheets online is just not sufficient.

Respectfully,

/s/

Zachary J. Smith