

Maine PRISONER ADVOCACY Coalition



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Testimony in Support of LD 1101 to the Committee on Judiciary

March 19, 2025

Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn, and distinguished members of the Committee:

My name is Peter Lehman and I live in Thomaston. I am a formerly incarcerated citizen and a person in long-term recovery.* I am testifying in support of LD 1101 on behalf of the Maine Prisoner Advocacy Coalition whose goal is to promote restorative practices in order to increase public safety and the health of our community.

You are all deeply aware of the legal issues addressed by this bill and the Constitutional crisis that calls for emergency legislation.

You may not be as deeply aware of the lives involved, of the **defendants with their lives placed on hold**, and the **families waiting**. This is also an emergency issue.

Almost all of the cases awaiting counsel have whole families WAITING in uncertainty for the next stage of their lives to unfold. Children waiting for pappu or mamma, or perhaps a brother or sister.

In their everyday lives, these **constituents of yours** are not “defendants.” These are mothers and fathers and children and aunts and uncles.

They may be waiting in jail, their life effectively stopped. And absent from their spouse, their children, their own brothers and sisters.

Or they may be waiting at home, out on bail. Perhaps even working and carrying on their life. Perhaps even close to normal. **But** with charges over their heads, with uncertainty and anxiety always present.

* In the interest of honesty and disclosure, a personal background statement is available on request.

Often, they have already lost their job or their car and their home.

Accusation is a powerful thing.

Punished before they even have a chance to defend themselves.

The waiting isn't a kindness or even a reprieve. It is a burden, an agony, a threat. It is a yawning chasm in their path.

These are mothers and fathers and children and aunts and uncles in crisis.

That's the emergency that begs for your attention.

Please help by unanimously supporting LD 1101.

Thank you for your attention.

I am happy to try to answer your questions.