

Testimony for the 131th Session of the Maine State Legislature
Joint Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety

Public Hearing April 24, 2023

LD 1086: OUGHT TO PASS

Chairpersons Senator Anne Beebe- Center and Representative Suzanne Salisbury and members of the Committee, my name is Suzanne Rudalevige; I am retired and living in Cape Elizabeth. I am a member of the HopeGateWay Church's Anti Racism Committee.

I support this bill wholeheartedly. I have spent many years in and around the criminal justice system and am aware of a couple things regarding this bill.

Firstly, I listened to the testimony at the 130th Legislative Session which seemed to be largely trumped by the state governmental leadership of the prisons' "1984 speak", denying that they practice solitary confinement when it is known that they do but use other words to cover that practice. Thus, a definition is a timely solution to that problem – one hopes.

Secondly, I am well aware of the racial discrimination in the criminal justice system at every point of contact. It is therefore most likely that those in solitary confinement, as here defined, are more likely to be of color. We need to have proper statistics which have been less than available when solitary confinement is used under different verbiage or denied.

I personally believe, supported by my Christian faith, that solitary confinement should be outlawed, since we know from all the research and testimony of those so held that it is destructive of human mental capacities and totally unnecessary for security. This bill is a step in the right direction.

Thank you.