



# Maine County Commissioners Association

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## *LD 1596, An Act to Facilitate the Creation of an Aroostook County Drug Treatment Court*

April 25, 2023

Chair Carney, Chair Moonen, and Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary, my name is Stephen Gorden and in addition to serving as a member of the board of commissioners for Cumberland County, I am writing today in my role as chair of the legislative policy committee of the Maine County Commissioners Association. We appreciate the opportunity to provide testimony to the Committee in support of LD 1596.

**About MCCA.** Briefly, the Maine County Commissioners Association was established in 1890 to assist Maine's county government in providing vital services to Maine citizens in a responsive, efficient, and credible manner. The Association is based in Augusta, represents all 16 of Maine's counties, and is governed by a board with representation from each participating county.

**Discussion.** LD 1596 appropriates ongoing funds to establish one Assistant District Attorney position to facilitate the creation of a drug treatment court in Aroostook County.

By way of background, Maine currently operates Adult Drug Treatment Courts in Androscoggin, Cumberland, Hancock, Penobscot, Washington, and York Counties. These courts maintain specialty dockets for eligible individuals whose involvement with the criminal justice system has been driven in large part by substance use disorder. Individuals in the judicial system who are at least 18 years of age, have a substance use disorder and a significant risk of future criminal conduct without intervention, and a poor prognosis for successful treatment without supervised intervention may be admitted to a drug treatment court after entering into a plea agreement. Entry into a drug treatment court is voluntary. Components of the treatment involve intensive judicial oversight, comprehensive and individualized substance use disorder treatment plans, community supervision, and drug testing, among other things.

These Adult Drug Treatment Courts are important to our State given the scope and growth of substance use disorder throughout all parts of Maine, both rural and urban. Substance use disorder also impacts county jails, as many individuals with a substance use disorder are ultimately housed in county jails, in many cases due to lack of treatment, housing, or other needed supports. We do not believe incarceration is the best way to deal with an individual's underlying substance use disorder, and Adult Drug Treatment Courts are an effective way to keep individuals out of jail and help treat the underlying issues that may have resulted in them ending up in the criminal justice system in the first place. In the long run, such an approach saves money, and saves lives. To the extent that LD 1596 works to facilitate the creation of an Adult Drug Treatment Court in rural Aroostook County, we write in support.

**Conclusion.** We appreciate the opportunity to provide testimony on this bill, and if you have questions or need additional information, please do not hesitate to let us know.

Respectfully submitted,

Stephen Gorden

**Comments of MCCA re LD 1596**

**April 25, 2023**

**Page 2**

Chair, Legislative Policy Committee

cc: Commissioner Richard Dutremble, President, MCCA  
James I. Cohen, Verrill Dana, LLP, MCCA Legislative Counsel