



MAINE  
Unitarian Universalist  
State Advocacy Network

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Senator Carney, Representative Mooney and distinguished members of the Committee on Judiciary:

My name is Naneen Chace-Ortiz, I live in Westbrook, and I speak on behalf of the Maine Unitarian Universalist State Advocacy Network (MUUSAN). We support LD 848 from a faith tradition that affirms the inherent worth and dignity of every person and seeks justice, equity and compassion in human relations, making no exception for those who have violated the law. LD 848 is also step towards dismantling the systemic racism that impacts our community because Black people who use drugs are more than 3.5 times as likely to be arrested for drug possession as white people who used drugs in Maine<sup>1</sup>.

Activated by the principles of our faith, MUUSAN believes in prioritizing redemption, rehabilitation and restoration of the individual offender as quickly as feasible to where they can contribute constructively as members of our communities. Allowing people to petition the court to expunge the record of the conviction after 5 years from the completion of the sentence (assuming no other conviction of any crime in those 5 years), removes the continuing burden that a conviction has on their records for employment, housing and other basic needs. LD 848 is a step toward a safer, more just, welcoming, and sustainable world for all of us.

I urge you to vote Ought to Pass on this bill to ensure that people who have served their time and presumably lived as law-abiding citizens for the 5 years thereafter, can be relieved of the very real impediment a conviction imposes. Thank you.

Naneen Chace-Ortiz, MSN, RN.

1. ACLU Maine and Maine Center for Economic Policy. A Better Path for Maine: The case for decriminalizing drugs, 2023. <https://www.aclumaine.org/en/publications/better-path-maine-case-decriminalizing-drugs>