

Larry Dansinger
Bangor
LD 1550

To the Committee on the Judiciary of the Maine Legislature:

I am writing to support five bills that seek to expunge or seal criminal records of individuals in Maine jails and prisons. Those are: LD 739 "RESOLUTION, Proposing an Amendment to the Constitution of Maine to Empower the Legislature to Allow the Expungement or Sealing of Certain Criminal Records;" LD 848 "An Act to Expunge Certain Nonviolent Drug Crimes;" LD 1536 "RESOLUTION, Proposing an Amendment to the Constitution of Maine to Amend the Governor's Power to Reprieve, Pardon and Commute Sentences and Remit Penalties;" LD 1550 "An Act to Authorize the Expungement of Records of Nonviolent Crimes;" and LD 1646 "An Act to Vacate or Adjust Sentences and Expunge Arrests, Convictions and Adjudications for Cannabis-related Offenses."

The purpose of punishing people for what are considered criminal acts is to attempt to prevent further criminal acts. And punishments are based on what is an appropriate amount of time being locked up or sanctioned in some other way, based on the nature of the crime a person is convicted of.

At least in theory, that should be the end of a person's punishment; they are now able to resume living their life, knowing that what they did, or at least convicted of, was wrong and hurtful in some way to others and/or themselves. They (should) have learned their lesson.

However, as we all know, that's almost never how it happens. A person is punished for years, decades, or for the rest of their life for what they were convicted of, over and over again. Being able to resume life, to contribute positively to local communities and to our state is difficult, if not impossible. The punishment should end when a person is released from incarceration, but it does not. It forces so many who have committed what are considered criminal acts to commit more, as high recidivism rates demonstrate.

That's why getting rid (expungement or sealing) of records, all records of criminal punishments, can allow a person to move past the worst thing(s) they have done and begin to contribute positively to our communities and state.

Punishment for commission of a crime should be based only on what is determined by law and by courts, not something that affects someone for the rest of their lives. Please vote "ought to pass" for LDs 739, 848, 1536, 1550, and 1646.

Sincerely,

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