



MAINE PRESS ASSOCIATION  
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Sen. Carney, Rep. Moonen, members of the Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary, my name is Judith Meyer. I am the editor of the Sun Journal in Lewiston, the Kennebec Journal and the Morning Sentinel.

I write on behalf of the Maine Press Association in opposition to LD 848, An Act to Expunge Certain Nonviolent Drug Crimes.

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When the Criminal Records Review Committee was formed and convened in 2021, on which a representative of the Maine Press Association served, we were tasked with coming forward with a recommendation on the concept of expunging certain nonviolent criminal records.

The committee – which included more than two dozen stakeholders in law enforcement, prison reform, public access, victim advocacy groups and other interested parties -- met for months and came forward with a number of recommendations, but could not settle the question of expunging crimes defined under Title 17-A, Section 1107-A because, while that section is specific to possession of small amounts of cocaine and methamphetamines, the statute also raises possession charges to felony level crimes if the defendant has certain previous convictions.

Criminal Records Review Committee members agreed that there is merit in the concept of expunging low-level misdemeanors, but this bill as written complicates the matter when there are previous convictions that can bring these convictions to felony level offenses.

Unfortunately, the Criminal Records Review Committee did not have time to further investigate expungement possibilities that make sense for Maine in the time allotted for our work.

Given the amount of research that has already been gathered and the level of discussion that has already been held on this concept by members of the Criminal Records Review Committee, the Maine Press Association opposes this bill and requests that Judiciary move further discussion back to a reconstituted Criminal Records Review Committee for recommendation.

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The Maine Press Association (MPA), founded in 1864, is one of the oldest professional news organizations in the nation. Our goals, as spelled out in our charter and by-laws are to promote

and foster high ethical standards and the best interests of the newspapers, journalists, and media organizations of the state of Maine that constitute its membership; to encourage improved business and editorial practices and better media environment in the state; and to improve the conditions of journalism and journalists by promoting and protecting the principles of freedom of speech and of the press and the public's right to know.