

April 25,2023

LD 1626 “An Act to Standardize Requirements Between Boards of Visitors for County Jails and Department of Corrections Correctional Facilities”.

Good afternoon, Senator Beebe-Center, Representative Salisbury, and Honorable Members of the Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety.

I am Kandie Cleaves, a resident of Garland, a member of the Board of Visitors for the Penobscot County Jail and the current Chair for the Consumer Council System of Maine and the Greater Bangor Area Local for the CCSM which includes all of Region 3.

Today I am testifying in favor of LD 1626 “An Act to Standardize Requirements Between Boards of Visitors for County Jails and Department of Corrections Correctional Facilities”.

While I support this bill, there are a few areas where I would like to see modification in the wording and requirements. These can be addressed in work session.

I want to keep as much control at the county level as possible. However, the lack of uniformity currently around the state being required to collect information from those living within the system and with prior experience is horribly lacking, as is compliance by many, to the current requirements: This makes additional oversight a necessity.

Requiring a plan to be created to allow in person interviews even during situations such as a pandemic should be included. During the shutdown, those working within the facilities still came and went for their jobs. It should be no different for those serving on a board or who provide other services. It is in those times that those residing within may need us the most.

I have been fortunate that Sheriff Morton has made a great effort to help make our local board well-functioning and helps when needed or requested.

While I am not someone with lived experience on the inside, my former husband spent much time incarcerated as well as many others I know and care about. I am though a person with lived experience around mental health issues. Having the right type of voices on the board can make a big difference. While former officers may make a good addition in some respects to a board, by helping others on it understand different aspects, having them be involved with the interviews feels counterproductive. Individuals being interviewed need the ability to feel completely confident and safe with board members, and that we will be watching out for their best interest.

In closing I would again ask that you pass LD 1626 and that during work session you bring back the voices who have testified here today to help.

Thank you,

Kandie Cleaves

Garland

