

# Maine PRISONER ADVOCACY Coalition



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## **Testimony in favor of LD 1863 to the Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety May 9, 2023**

Senator Beebe-Center, Representative Salisbury, and distinguished members of the Committee:

My name is Peter Lehman and I live in Thomaston.

As you all know, I served a six year sentence beginning at the old prison in Thomaston. I want to talk with you today about the PEOPLE who grow old and die in prison. And their friends and loved ones.

As in our community outside, many of the leaders of the prison community are the older men, some of whom die there.

I want to remember a friend from the old prison who helped and guided me when I was there. Younger than I was, Dean was active in the church community and was serving a life sentence because he had a fatal disease. But he never gave up and always lent a hand.

Unlike some jailhouse Christians, Dean really tried to live his faith. He helped guide and support me, this bewildered college professor in this alien land.

I was not the only resident he helped. He was one of the men who supported and embodied the redemptive community that can be possible even inside those dark walls.

He died while I was at Bolduc and was buried there. I was the Bolduc gardener and remember kneeling in my flower bed watching the burial service from afar and crying with grief for my fallen friend.

In his honor, I urge you to vote Ought to Pass.

I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.

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\* In the interest of honesty and disclosure, a personal background statement is available on request.