

19 May 2023

Senator Beebe-Center, Representative Salisbury, and esteemed members of the Joint Standing Committee on Criminal Justice,

My name is Dr. Tim Hughes, and I am writing in support of the concept of **LD 1626, "An Act to Standardize Requirements Between Boards of Visitors for County Jails and Department of Corrections Correctional Facilities,"** but with serious reservations regarding the bill as it is currently written..

I am a retired physician and a board member of the Restorative Justice Project Maine, but I am writing to you as a member of the Knox and Waldo Counties Board of Visitors for close to the past three years. There are four of us who have willingly volunteered to take on this important obligation. We are two licensed clinical social workers, a retired criminal justice professor, and myself, a retired physician. Current law dictates seven members (or is it 14 members, since we are a combined Board for both Knox and Waldo Counties?), but we have been unable to find more than the four of us. We are also supposed to visit each jail facility at least once per year but have been able to arrange to visit one facility only twice in three years and we have never visited the other facility, the stated reason being "understaffing" such that we cannot be accommodated.

The new bill mandates additional duties and responsibilities for the Board (with no mention of remuneration), including four visits per year to the the facility and an annual report to the Legislature for each County Board. It no longer allows counties to combine boards and also mandates a specific knowledge, gender and profession for individual members.

My concern is that we in the Waldo and Knox Counties Board of Visitors already cannot find enough volunteers to fill the Board roster, and with added responsibilities and specifications, it will be completely impractical.

There are various ways to solve this, but as it stands the bill appears to be unworkable.

Sincerely,

Tim Hughes MD

Tim Hughes
Belfast
LD 1626

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