

Esteemed Members of the Criminal Justice Committee,

My name is Nathan Goodwin, and I am a resident of Maine State Prison. I am writing to provide testimony on **LD 45: An Act Allowing the Department of Corrections to Offset Some of the Costs of Technology Provided to Residents of Correctional Facilities.**

I am an online college student at **Liberty University Online**, working toward a **Bachelor's Degree in Biblical Apologetics**. For six years, I held a job within the prison, but due to the current budget crisis, that position was eliminated on **January 17, 2025**. Despite this, I have been blessed with the opportunity to continue my education while incarcerated, though funding it remains a significant challenge.

Because of the current **Pell Grant restrictions**, I rely on **private scholarships and my own institutional earnings** to pay for tuition. **Liberty University Online charges \$455 per credit hour, plus a \$349 technology fee per semester.** The average hourly wage for jobs within Maine State Prison is approximately **\$2.00 per hour**, and my former job paid **\$200 per month**. For the **Spring 2025 semester**, I had to write a check for **\$1,480** from my trust account to cover tuition and fees.

While I understand the need to fund the technology that supports incarcerated students, I urge the committee to carefully consider the financial burden that an additional **"reasonable" technology fee** would place on residents like myself. Many **online universities charge technology fees between \$300 and \$500 per semester**, an amount that could **determine whether I can afford a second course per semester or not.**

I respectfully request that the committee consider placing a cap on this fee or implementing a sliding scale based on institutional earnings. For students who are actively working to better themselves through education, unexpected financial barriers could slow or even halt their progress.

I will close with a quote from the DOC's own website:

"Did you know?

Access to education in prison lowers the odds of recidivating by 43 percent and increases the likelihood of employment by 13 percent, while saving \$5 for every \$1 spent."¹

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
Nathan Goodwin

¹ <https://www.maine.gov/corrections/programs/workrelease>