

Christopher Gray  
Hermon  
LD 179

Dear Legislators,

My name is Christopher D. Gray and I am a resident of Hermon, Maine with my wife and son. I have spent the last twelve (12) years of my life dedicated to making Maine a safer place for our residents, through my service as a law enforcement officer. During that time I have attained a plethora of specialties, including becoming certified as a Drug Recognition Expert- a title held by only 85 total officers throughout our State. I take pride in my work and show compassion to our residents daily.

I write today in utter disbelief that LD 179 - An Act to Amend the Maine Bail Code to Eliminate the Class E Crime of Violation of Condition of Release- was even suggested by someone for passage in our State. Should this bill pass, this will not fare well for Maine residents in any way, shape, or form. I could give you COUNTLESS examples ("real life, really happened" examples) in support of my position on this matter. However, I will try to remain as brief as I can on this substantial issue..

Through my experience in over 12 years patrolling our streets, I have run across many individuals who were violent and assaultive, career fraudsters, active drug users, repeat domestic violence offenders, opportunistic thieves and many others. These are serious offenses and like most offenses in statute, they typically have a VICTIM. These bail conditions permit an offender's early release from jail with a court date. This frees our extremely overcrowded and under-funded jails. It has been a long-standing practice that we request bail conditions for these offenders upon their release and often, these conditions either wholly prevent further crime or at the very least help deter and curb it. Think about the victim here.

Bail conditions are in essence "general guidelines" for these offenders to abide by. They are only approved by a bail commissioner if they are "tailored" to the original offense that was charged. For example- if a known drug trafficker is found in possession of drugs, they would receive standard conditions including: "Not to Use or Possess Illegal Drugs and their Derivatives". This would be a small price to pay in exchange for freedom until their court appearance. FREE really, should they choose to obey the law and abide by their conditions, which the majority of first-time offenders do. It is the serious, repeat offenders we typically find in violation though. We are not out here arresting your grandmother for an obvious mistake or failing to correct her address with the court. Think about domestic violence assaults here.

Heroin, Fentanyl, Carfentanyl, Cocaine, Methamphetamine. These are poisons that are literally killing our children. I know this because I have witnessed the death of an infant due to an inadvertent drug exposure firsthand. Had the dealer who sold the mother those drugs had bail conditions, it may have saved an infant's life, by the possibility of conducting bail checks and seizing those drugs. Those conditions were missed upon his prior booking. Think about babies here.

By allowing this legislation to proceed, you are directly and blatantly allowing drugs in our state to continue to be trafficked by criminals, without repercussion. This may seem far-fetched at first glance, but this is a REAL byproduct of what this legislation will create. How, you ask?

Consider for a moment- a traffic stop with an operator who has extensive drug history and denies a consent search of the vehicle. You as the officer also have no probable cause to search. If the operator has bail conditions- we legally search the vehicle and seize the drugs. If he isn't on bail- he gets to skate free to sell his drugs, ultimately resulting in the deaths of more of Maine's innocent children.

If you've never seen the intraosseous administration of Narcan to an infant experiencing agonal breathing from a FENTANYL OVERDOSE...

I can confidently tell you, it's a scene you do not want to see twice in your life.

These bail conditions are absolutely vital to the proper enforcement of criminal

violations and to keep these (often repeat) offenders "honest". There is no redundancy here. Do this State a favor and think about the victims of the underlying offenses these people are committing, before casting your vote. If this passes, you are asking us to ignore and turn our nose to an evident violation and in lieu of what? A referral to revoke bail on their original case? That is a devastating blow when it's the ONLY offense we find on particular scenes, and will allow drugs to continue to degrade our communities.

Bail conditions are a small segment of the complex, webbed framework of our executive branch, that is vitally important in preventing much more than just a "repeat offender".

It was bad enough when police lost a MASSIVE chunk of vehicle searches when marijuana was legalized Statewide. Yet, everyone wonders how heroin has become such an epidemic in our state so quickly? The smell of marijuana alone was probable cause for a vehicle search pre-legalization. In many of those instances, that search would lead to (you guessed it)... HARDER DRUGS being detected and seized. But that's overlooked when swiping the pen for what the bill says on its face. Think about EVERYTHING and EVERYONE it affects...

If enacted, this legislation will only aid in making vehicle searches even harder. It will be another nail in our coffin and for what end? What does this legislation aim to solve in the first place? To lighten the load for some prosecutors who have backlogged cases since covid? When we are understaffed, we get told to work harder and take more overtime. It would be great if the rest of the world had our work ethic.

I implore you to consider-

An offender I took off the road this past Tuesday night for this VERY offense. Title 15; Sec 1092. Yes, violating his recently assigned bail conditions. He had a specific bail condition of a curfew from 2000-0600 hours and I had him on a traffic stop at almost midnight. Four hours past his curfew... This guy has run drugs around our state FOR YEARS. Had I not arrested that ONE guy for that ONE bail violation, I would not have had the opportunity to seize two (2) grams of fentanyl off his friend and arrest him, either... OR had the opportunity to arrest his other passenger for the two (2) active warrants she had out for her from another county. A simple, tiny, seemingly "insignificant" bail violation turned in three (3) criminals that night... Criminals, who otherwise would have made it to their friends house to use and sell drugs... had it not been for that simple opportunity to arrest him on that single bail violation. Surprise... criminals hang out with criminals.

What if his passenger with the 2 grams of fentanyl made it to his friends house, overdosed and ultimately died? Do you want that blood on your hands? Now you know... eliminating this offense by passing this bill, increases the opportunity for drug overdoses. It literally lets drugs run free and undetected...

You need to think outside the box when faced with any bill and consider ALL of the repercussions that will inevitably result from enacting it. I encourage you to take a drive down Hammond Street in Bangor for a few hours and tell me what you see. Better yet I encourage you to come for a ride along with a proactive police officer for a full shift in a busy city, to receive the full experience, firsthand.

I STRONGLY urge you to vote down this incredibly disastrous bill in LD-179.

I appreciate your time in reading this today. Please feel free to reach out if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

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