

# Maine PRISONER ADVOCACY Coalition



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## **Testimony in support of LD 179 to the Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety**

February 3, 2025

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

My name is Peter Lehman and I live in Thomaston. I am a formerly incarcerated citizen and a person in long-term recovery.\* I am testifying in support of LD 179 on behalf of the Maine Prisoner Advocacy Coalition whose goal is to promote restorative practices in order to increase public safety and the health of our community.

Currently, it's a crime to violate any condition of bail. Period. No matter what the condition is. This bill seeks to repeal that crime with very few exceptions.<sup>1</sup>

The first question I had when reviewing this statute was “Why?” Why make it a crime to violate conditions? After all, violation already has consequences—bail may be revoked. But why make it a new crime?

Remember, the person out on bail generally has not been convicted of a crime. Violation of Condition of Release may be the only crime they have committed.

So why have this crime at all? To make sure we get the defendant on something? To ensure that the defendant has a criminal record? To make sure the defendant is in jail?

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<sup>1</sup> It would still be a Class C crime if the condition was prohibited contact with victim, witness, or their family or it was prohibited possession of “a firearm or other dangerous weapon.”

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

Or perhaps to make sure that the Court is even more overloaded and short of resources? To take up valuable court time? To make sure it takes even longer to get cases heard and resolved? To create a burden on the court?

Perhaps the reason for this crime is to ensure that the defendant will face high barriers to employment, housing and other necessities of life by giving them a Criminal Record. We make that Record public to WalMart and everybody else for a small fee and it can ruin a life.

All of these are valid and commonplace outcomes or consequences of making this Violation of Condition of Release a crime. For no valid reason that I can think of.

Silly, really. What were they thinking?

We urge you to unanimously vote **Ought to Pass on LD 179** and Eliminate the Crime of Violation of Condition of Release.

Thank you for your attention.

I am glad to try to answer your questions.