



**Maine Medical
Association**



**TESTIMONY OF THE MAINE MEDICAL ASSOCIATION
AND
THE MAINE OSTEOPATHIC ASSOCIATION**

In Support Of

**LD 246 An Act to Establish the Option of Sentencing Alternatives for Primary
Caregivers**

Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary
Room 438, State House, Augusta, Maine
Wednesday, February 26, 2025

Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn, and Members of the Judiciary Committee, my name is Lani Graham, and I am a former Chief Public Health Officer for Maine. I am submitting this testimony in support of LD 246, An Act to Establish the Option of Sentencing Alternatives for Primary Caregivers, on behalf of the Maine Medical Association and the Maine Osteopathic Association.

The Maine Medical Association (MMA) is a professional organization representing over 4,000 physicians, residents, and medical students in Maine. MMA's mission is to support Maine physicians, advance the quality of medicine in Maine, and promote the health of all Maine people. The Maine Osteopathic Association (MOA) is a professional organization representing more than 1,200 osteopathic physicians, residents, and medical students in Maine whose mission is to serve the Osteopathic profession of the State of Maine through a coordinated effort of professional education, advocacy, and member services in order to ensure the availability of quality osteopathic health care to the people of this State.

We should look very closely at alternative sentencing options for primary caregivers for children, the elderly, or those with disabilities because they serve vital functions in their families and communities. For example, let us consider what happens when the primary caregiver of an elderly person goes to prison. That elderly person could end up in a nursing home on Medicaid, and the cost would be over \$150,000.00 per year.¹ And this doesn't even begin to account for the emotional loss of their support person.

Some have argued that this legislation is unnecessary because courts already have the option of considering sentencing alternatives for primary caregivers. While this may be

¹<https://www.seniorliving.org/nursing-homes/costs/>

true, such alternatives are clearly not being used uniformly across the state. Given the devastating consequences of losing a primary caregiver for children, the elderly, and the disabled, extra attention to this issue is certainly warranted.

The United States incarcerates more people than any developed nation.² Therefore, it is clear that we should look for every opportunity to reduce the number of incarcerated individuals because every incarceration is very expensive. Estimates for Maine indicate that taxpayers pay over \$100,000.00 per year for the average incarcerated resident.³ While we can argue about exact figures, it is clearly not cheap, so we want to make sure we incarcerate only those who truly need to be separated from society.

Thank you for considering the thoughts of Maine's physicians and public health community about LD 246. We urge you to support this bill. I would be happy to respond to any questions you may have.

Lani Graham, MD, MPH

²<https://www.prisonpolicy.org/global/2024.html#:~:text=The%20U.S.%20has%20the%20highest,use%20of%20prisons%20and%20jails>.

³ <https://usafacts.org/articles/how-much-do-states-spend-on-prisons/>