

Testimony in opposition to LD 626
to the Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety
March 3, 2025

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

My name is Sarah Johnson and I am a resident of Sanford.

I am writing in opposition of LD 626, An Act to Explicitly Allow the Department of Corrections to Charge Room and Board to Residents Who Perform Remote Work in Detention and Correctional Facilities and to Amend the Laws nGoverning Rehabilitative Programs.

I oppose this bill as it would require those with the least resources to pay yet another large fee. We should be supporting remote work. We should be providing and supporting all educational and vocational training programs possible throughout the prison system. There should be accolades and support for all who participate in these programs, not excessive fines, fees and taxes. Programs, remote work, and with it the ability to build some financial stability and ensure a successful release are all related to the DOC Mission “Making our Communities Safer by Reducing Harm through Supportive Intervention, Empowering Change, and Restoring Lives”. ‘Room and board’ should be part of the Department of Corrections budget and responsibility to fulfill their mission.

I also oppose this bill as I do not see exactly where these funds will be spent. I have found it difficult to obtain a detailed budget of the DOC, and will be submitting an FOAA request to understand where current ‘room and board’ funds are spent. To me ‘room and board’ implies paying for some level of control over your living space. Would those paying ‘room and board’ be able to regulate the temperature of their living space or their hot water? Would the ‘room and board’ allow for a broader choice of healthier foods, a thicker mattress, or a comfortable pillow? At best ‘room and board’ should be labeled an income tax paid directly to the Department of Corrections.

I oppose this bill because it is another unfair tax and demonstrates the need for transparency and oversight of DOC policies and budget. We are all Mainers, and if the Department of Corrections is unable to care for our fellow citizens then there should be bills to increase their budget. The DOC budget should reflect their priorities, as described in their mission. This proposed legislation deflects their responsibilities onto those who can not afford it, and will be most adversely affected by it. That is not reducing harm or restoring lives.

I hope you will oppose this bill.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sarah Johnson

Sanford, Maine.