



TESTIMONY OF MICHAEL KEBEDE, ESQ.
LD 626– Ought Not to Pass

**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
Governing Rehabilitative Programs**

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Joint Standing Committee on
Criminal Justice and Public Safety

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Senator Beebe-Center, Representative Hasenfus, and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety, greetings. My name is Michael Kebede, and I am a policy director for the American Civil Liberties Union of Maine, a statewide organization committed to advancing and preserving civil liberties guaranteed by the Maine and U.S. Constitutions. On behalf of our members, I respectfully urge you to oppose this bill.

If enacted, LD 626 would, among other things, explicitly allow the Commissioner of the Department of Corrections to charge room and board to incarcerated people who perform remote work in a prison.

The fact is, almost all people who are incarcerated will eventually be released, and the opportunity to do remote work is an important part of the re-entry and rehabilitation process. Given that people with arrest and conviction records face significant barriers to getting jobs, housing and educational opportunities, remote-work from prison provides a rare chance to gain work experience before release. Charging room and board could discourage incarcerated people from looking for and obtaining remote work opportunities, undermining the Department's rehabilitative purpose.

We understand that the state is facing budget shortfalls. But we urge the Department of Corrections to look to other sources to balance its budget.

We urge you to vote ought not to pass.