



TESTIMONY OF MICHAEL KEBEDE, ESQ.
LD 532 – Ought Not to Pass

**An Act to Protect Health Care Workers by
Addressing Assaults in Health Care Settings**

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 urge you to oppose this bill.

If enacted, this bill would expand the current class C crime of assault in an emergency room to include all assaults of health care workers. *See* 17-A M.R.S. §752-F.

Maine should only expand its criminal code when existing laws are insufficient. That is not the case here. Under 17-A M.R.S. §752-C(2), assault on an emergency care provider includes hospital personnel assisting in an emergency. That crime is a Class C felony. For non-emergency health care workers, the law also provides serious penalties: simple assault is punishable by up to 364 days in jail and a \$2,000 fine. 17-A M.R.S. §207(l)(A).

While all people should be safe in their workplaces, there is no evidence that making all assaults of health care workers a felony will lead to safer working conditions. It will, however, lead to longer prison terms and higher rates of incarceration for our state, at great cost to Maine families. The ACLU of Maine is particularly opposed to the creation of felony-level crimes because of the devastating consequences of felony records, which create permanent barriers to employment, education, and housing.

We urge you to vote *ought not to pass*.