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March 24, 2025

Senator Anne Beebe-Center - Chair
Representative Tavis Hasenfus - Chair
Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety
100 State House Station Room 436
Augusta, ME 04330

RE: LD 647 -- An Act Regarding Telephone and Video Call Access in Detention and Correctional Facilities and Jails

Dear Senator Beebe-Center, Representative Hasenfus, and Members of the Judiciary Committee:

MACDL supports LD 647.

Attorney client communication is critical for effective representation. This bill would ensure that inmates are given access to free telephone and video calls with their attorneys.

Currently, not all jails offer free inmate telephone or free video calls with their attorneys.

As this committee knows, our criminal justice system is in crisis. Part of the crisis is a lack of attorneys for incarcerated individuals. Currently, attorneys spend too much time in their vehicles traveling to jails to visit clients because there is no effective way to communicate with them via telephone or video. Travel can include multi-hour trips to visit clients at a jail because the jail lacks a video visitation option. This bill should help free up time that attorneys spend traveling which will help resolve cases faster, more cost effectively, which in turn should allow attorneys to take on more cases over the course of a year.

Additionally, this bill would not only benefit attorneys but it would also benefit inmates and their families. This bill would ensure telephone and video visits between inmates and their families. "Family phone calls are shown to reduce the likelihood of recidivism"¹. A 2014 study of incarcerated women found that those who had phone contact with a family member were less

¹ See https://www.prisonpolicy.org/blog/2021/12/21/family_contact/

likely to be reincarcerated within five years after their release. In fact, phone contact has a stronger effect on recidivism compared to visitation, which the study also examined.²

This bill should be voted Ought to Pass.

Thank you for the opportunity to address this Committee on this important issue.

Sincerely,

/s/

Jeremy Pratt, Esq.
President, MACDL

² See Barrick, Kelle, et. al., *Reentering Women: The Impact of Social Ties on Long-Term Recidivism*, The Prison Journal (2014).