

Maine PRISONER ADVOCACY Coalition



March 24, 2025

Senator Beebe-Center, Representative Hasenfus and distinguished members of the Criminal Justice and Public Safety Committee:

My name is Jan Collins, I am Assistant Director of Maine Prisoner Advocacy Coalition (MPAC) an organization committed to ethical, positive, and humane changes in Maine's prison system. I am here in support of [LD 405](#) An Act to Define "Solitary Confinement" for the Laws Governing Jails and Correctional Facilities.

This bill is quite simply a definition of the term “solitary confinement”. The words “solitary confinement” conjure up different images for different people. If we were to go around the room asking each person present how to define it, there would likely be as many definitions in the room as there are people. Without an agreed upon definition, it is not possible to have a conversation about the pros and cons of the practice. Each one of us would be talking about their own vision of what the word means and completely misunderstanding the person discussing it with us.

Rather than create a definition out of thin air, the bill proposes to use the definition as outlined in the United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners, also referred to as the Nelson Mandela Rules, universally acknowledged minimum standards for prison management and the humane treatment of prisoners.

Maine is considered a leader in humane corrections practices. A position we should take pride in. However, most other states have defined solitary confinement using the minimum standards outlined by the United Nations.¹ Maine has not.

It is time Maine lived up to its reputation in so many other areas of corrections practices by adopting this definition of the minimum standard for the humane treatment of incarcerated residents.

Thank-you for your support of [LD 405](#) An Act to Define "Solitary Confinement" for the Laws Governing Jails and Correctional Facilities.

With appreciation,

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¹Arianna Zoghi, Alexandra Harrington, Judith Resnik, Anna VanCleave. *Regulating Restrictive Housing: State and Federal Legislation on Solitary Confinement as of July 1, 2019 A Research Brief*. The Liman Center at Yale Law School. https://law.yale.edu/sites/default/files/area/center/liman/document/restrictive_housing_legislation_research_brief.pdf