

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 533](#) An Act to Allow Residents of the Department of Corrections to Opt In to Additional Restitution for Their Victims.

Most of us believe it is important for individuals who cause harm to take responsibility for their actions and to, wherever possible, take steps to repair the harm. The goal in all we do is to facilitate healing.

Unfortunately, the justice system is itself a barrier to this process. Although restorative justice programs have been established in several communities around the state, the focus has been primarily on youth and on creating an alternative pathway for young people to take accountability for their actions while avoiding the harmful effects of incarceration.

An individual who has been convicted and is in prison is barred from any contact with the person they harmed. Although this prohibition may provide some comfort, it is a barrier to those who would like to facilitate healing by taking actions to repair the harm they have done.

This bill would allow for the creation of a blind trust. Individuals who are incarcerated could put money in an account for the use of the person they harmed. No contact, verbal or otherwise, would be made between the individuals. The Department of Corrections Victims Services Coordinator will locate and notify the victim of the accounts existence. The harmed person could choose to use the funds or not use them.

The individual who caused the harm will not know if the money is accessed. If after five years the money is not claimed, the state will deposit the money in the account of the victims compensation fund.

The person providing the funds is barred from revealing their participation. No benefit can accrue to them as a result, except the personal gratification of striving towards healing.

Currently, someone who has done harm can ask to have a letter placed in their case file in the DA's office apologizing to the person they harmed. The letter is never seen by the person harmed unless, by chance, they ask if a letter was ever written and placed in the file. It may never be accessed.

If we believe that people who cause harm are responsible for reparations, this bill would be a first step towards making that happen.

Thank-you for your support.

With Appreciation,

Jan

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