



# Maine County Commissioners Association

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March 26, 2025

Sen. Beebe-Center, Chair  
Rep. Hasenfus, Chair  
Joint Standing Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety  
100 State House Station  
Augusta, ME 04333

Re: ***Testimony of MCCA regarding LD 981, An Act to Provide Electronic Notification to Victims of Crimes***

Chair Beebe-Center, Chair Hasenfus, and Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety:

On behalf of the Maine County Commissioners Association, we appreciate the opportunity to provide testimony to this Committee ***in support of*** LD 981. Currently, county jails are required to notify victims of crime when there is a change in the release status of certain jail residents. This system is not unified and is costly. LD 981 represents a proposal by county jails to develop a uniform, electronic system to allow county jails to efficiently and cost-effectively ensure that victims of crime receive timely and accurate notifications. We strongly encourage the Legislature to help this matter move forward with a positive vote.

**About MCCA.** Briefly, the Maine County Commissioners Association was established in 1890 to assist Maine's county government in providing vital services to Maine citizens in a responsive, efficient, and credible manner. The Association is based in Augusta, represents all 16 of Maine's counties, and is governed by a board with representation from each participating county.

**What does LD 981 do?** Current law requires written notice to be made to victims of crimes if a defendant is released on pre-conviction bail or released or escaped from custody. This bill allows for that notice to be electronic and requires the County Corrections Professional Standards Council to implement an automated crime victims notification system. The bill also provides a one-time appropriation to help stand up the system, after which the operating costs of the system would be funded by each participating county jail.

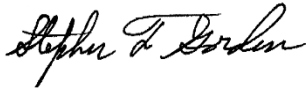
**Discussion.** Notifying victims of crime associated with the release of certain defendants is an important function of county jails. Currently, each county jail has developed a system of notification that is labor intensive and not standardized across the state. This system functions well, but if the system were uniform and upgraded to expand the manner of notification to victims of crime, it would be less costly and provide better service. However, developing a uniform system requires up front costs that counties cannot afford. It also requires the assistance of state government to help ensure uniform standards.

Under the bill, the County Corrections Professional Standards Council is proposed to be the home in state government for this system. We think highly of this Council, which is a statutorily-created body comprised of seven members, including two representatives of county government, two representatives of sheriffs, one municipal representative, the Commissioner of Corrections or designee, and one additional member of the Department. As established by statute, this Council has no appropriated budget or staff. Its mission is to advise on jail standards, provide budget recommendations for state support for county jails, and adopt rules governing the financial accounting and reporting of county jails.


Our concern with the proposal in this bill to designate the Council with authority over this important victim notification project is that the Council has neither the mission nor resources to undertake this work. Rather, we think this work is best housed within the Department of Corrections. Moreover, since the mission of this bill is to create efficiencies in the operation of county jails, we would hope that the Department would enthusiastically want to take on the opportunity presented by this bill.

**Conclusion.** We appreciate the opportunity to provide testimony in support of this bill. We urge the Committee to support this bill, with the caveat that the responsibility for carrying out the duties of the bill should be assigned to the Department of Corrections, not the County Corrections Professional Standards Council. If you have questions or need additional information, please do not hesitate to let us know.

Respectfully submitted,



Stephen Gorden  
Co-Chair, Legislative Policy Committee, MCCA



Jean-Marie Caterina  
Co-Chair, Legislative Policy Committee, MCCA

cc: Commissioner Andre Cushing, President, MCCA  
James I. Cohen, Verrill Dana, LLP, Legislative counsel for MCCA