

Testimony in Support of LD 822:
An Act to End the Collection of Certain Probation Fees
Sponsored by Senator Beebe-Center

March 25, 2025

Senator Beebe-Center, Representative Hasenfus, and Members of the Criminal Justice and Public Safety Committee,

My name is Ashley Mackie, and I currently reside at Maine Correctional Center in Windham. I am here today to voice my strong support for LD 822, a bill that seeks to eliminate certain probation fees in Maine. This issue is deeply personal to me, as I've seen firsthand how financial obligations create unnecessary obstacles, making it harder for individuals to successfully reintegrate into society. Passing this bill would be a critical step in ensuring that probation serves as a pathway to rehabilitation, rather than imposing an additional financial burden that hinders reentry.

A while ago, I was violated for a failed drug test, but what followed that violation was even more frustrating. In addition to the violation, probation decided to add another violation for failure to pay fees. This came even though I had made multiple attempts to pay the fees, but the system didn't allow me to do so. I tried to pay using my Chime debit card, but it wasn't accepted. Despite my efforts, I was penalized for non-payment, which wasn't due to a lack of willingness on my part but rather due to the difficulties of navigating the payment system.

This experience highlights how probation fees can trap people in cycles of debt. Many individuals, including myself, are already struggling with finding stable employment and housing. These financial burdens make it even harder to succeed on probation and move forward in life. Instead of supporting rehabilitation, these fees only create additional hurdles that increase the likelihood of violations and re-incarceration.

By eliminating these fees, we can ensure that probation serves as a tool for rehabilitation rather than a means of generating revenue. The justice system should focus on helping individuals rebuild their lives, not penalize them further for trying to comply.

I strongly urge you to support LD 822 and help ensure that Maine's probation system remains focused on rehabilitation and successful re-entry, rather than imposing unnecessary financial burdens.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I would be happy to answer any questions.

Sincerely,

Ashley S. Mackie
Windham, Maine