

March 31, 2025,

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

My name is Erica King, and I am a resident of Portland. For over twenty years, I have worked as a social worker and policy problem solver with the staff, administration, and residents of the Department of Corrections. I am here today to provide educational testimony, neither for nor against LD 822, a bill that aims to eliminate two specific probation fees in the state of Maine. This committee must investigate whether people under the supervision of the Maine Department of Corrections are helped or hurt by these legal financial obligations (LFOs).

Fines and fees are the subject of national policy recommendations highlighted by many national think tanks, including Vera Institute of Justice, the Fines and Fees Justice Center, the Brennan Center for Justice, and the Robina Institute of Criminal Law and Criminal Justice. It is common for law enforcement agencies to use fines, fees, and restitution as economic sanctions, all of which are essentially mandated debts that individuals are required to pay.

As one of the poorest states in New England, Maine must consider whether these fines are also counterproductive to its mission. Maine ranks 40th nationally on our practices in this regardⁱ. As an advisor to the national [Women's Justice Commission](#), compelling national data has confirmed that these fees lead to increased prison for women in particular, adverse childhood experiences for their children, and detract from basic community needs.

All available evidence suggests they are a debt trap for our poorest Maine families and contribute to more crime than prevent it. Fees undermine success, payment of basic needs, payments to victims, restitution, and the community economic and social wellbeing of working families, especially women. Aside from being counter to the rehabilitative mission, fees are an unreliable income source because they are imposed regardless of the person's ability to pay, and the cost of collecting said fees sometimes outweighs the benefit of them.

Under Maine's current system, individuals on probation are required to pay general supervision fees and additional fees if they request temporary leave from their jurisdiction of residence, even if they are not being supervised in said jurisdiction. Dozens of people

under supervision, current and former, have described to be how this collateral sanction is harming Maine children and families, as these fines divert resources from basic needs.

LD822 may contribute to revenue shortfalls if this body does not find more reliable, productive sources of income to fund government operations, following the lessons learned from Alaska, Connecticut, Delaware, D.C., Massachusetts, Oregon, South Dakota, Washington, and Virginia, which don't collect fees at allⁱⁱ. However, LD 822 would have positive outcomes for Maine families, especially primary caregivers who are on probation, and help ensure that Maine's model remains focused on humanization and success.

Thank you for your thoughtful deliberations, especially in a challenging economic climate for most Mainers. I would be happy to answer any questions that this body may have at a future work session, either via email at ericahking@gmail.com or by phone at 207.318.8289.

Sincerely,

Erica King

Portland Maine

ⁱ <https://ncaj.org/state-rankings/justice-index/fines-and-fees>

ⁱⁱ A National Study on the Effect of Supervision Fees on Probation Agency Operations