



Testimony in Support of LD 421: *An Act to Eliminate Barriers to Reentry into the Community After Incarceration by Repealing Certain Driver's License Suspension Provisions*

April 7, 2025

Senator Beebe-Center, Representative Hasenfus, and Honorable Members of the Committee on CJPS,

My name is Tess Parks. I am the Policy Director of the Maine Recovery Action Project (ME-RAP), a grassroots network of Mainers working on community and public policy based solutions to substance use. I also served as a member of the Criminal Records Review Committee (CRRRC), representing the recovery community. I am here today to testify in support of LD 421 on behalf of our statewide team of organizers.

Maine state law currently authorizes courts to suspend a person's license, permit, or privilege to operate a motor vehicle for up to five years for committing certain drug crimes. Even if an individual serves years for the conviction, **the period of suspension does not begin until the person completes their sentence of incarceration.** LD 421 would repeal the provisions in Maine's Criminal Code that authorize the suspension of an individual's driver's license for certain drug offenses.

While serving on the CRRRC, we explored the maze of collateral consequences that severely limit the opportunities of individuals with criminal convictions when attempting to rebuild their lives. Among the most damaging of these consequences is the loss of one's driver's license—especially in a rural state like Maine, where driving is often the only viable means of transportation. License suspensions make it significantly harder for people to meet the basic demands of daily life—getting to work, attending medical appointments, participating in recovery programs, or supporting their families.

For many, securing employment post-incarceration is critical to successful re-entry. Reinstating driving privileges plays a key role in actively participating in the workforce. Individuals with criminal records already face barriers in the workforce. Studies have shown that individuals with a felony on their record earns \$7,000 less per year, on average, than a person that does not have a criminal record¹.

In a state where nearly 90% of residents rely on cars to commute and 93% of families own a vehicle², the ability to drive is not a luxury—it is a necessity. License suspensions hit rural and low-income Mainers hardest, exacerbating geographic and economic inequalities.

Our criminal justice system should support rehabilitation and reentry—not hinder it. LD 421 is a common-sense, compassionate step forward that eliminates an unnecessary obstacle to reintegration while promoting public safety, economic opportunity, and community wellbeing. I urge the committee to vote "Ought to Pass" on LD 421.

I thank you for your time, and I am willing to answer any questions.

¹ Final Report of the Criminal Records Review Committee (State of Maine). December 2024. Page 16.

² https://mcspolicycenter.umaine.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/122/2021/06/MaineTransportationEquity_20May2021-1.pdf

Tess Parks
Policy Director, ME-RAP
tess@me-rap.org