Testimony in opposition of LD 1536
the Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety
April 23, 2025

Senator Beebe-Center, Representative Hasenfus and distinguished members of the Committee:

My name is Sarah Johnson and I am a resident of Sanford.
I am writing in opposition of LD 1536, An Act to Amend the Laws Governing Bail.

LD 1536 has the potential to do harm to our residents, businesses and communities.
It seems that for the $60.00 bail commissioner fee, the bill could harm a business, a family member in need of care, and a person who has otherwise qualified to be eligible for release and who may have a serious medical condition and be in some form or care or treatment that would be cut off by denial of bail.
LD 1536 does not seem to address public safety or otherwise change the bail process.

This harms the community, possibly an employer over the loss of an employee and strains already underfunded public services to help families. Maine is in a crisis now having lost a lawsuit because we are unable to provide defense attorneys. Denial of bail over a $60 fee with no other mitigating circumstances has a high probability of continued Sixth Amendment rights violations, and so the potential for more lawsuits.

Maine is also in a budget crisis adding stress to MaineCare and our overall health care system. LD 1536 has the potential to add to that stress by interrupting health care or removing care from a family member who will then need more public services.

People in jail, especially without an attorney, cannot prepare for trial as they wait for their day in court in an overloaded system. How can we consider filling our jails with more of our neighbors who are still, once again, presumed innocent and eligible for release, based on their economic circumstances. We should be moving to a more restorative and supportive system, not one that violates more rights and harms more families.

I hope you will oppose LD 1536.

Thank you for your time and consideration.
Sarah Johnson
Sanford, Maine.