

Maine PRISONER ADVOCACY Coalition



April 23, 2025

Senator Beebe-Center, Representative Hasenfus and distinguished members of the Criminal Justice and Public Safety Committee:

My name is Jan Collins, I am Assistant Director of Maine Prisoner Advocacy Coalition (MPAC) an organization committed to ethical, positive, and humane changes in Maine's prison system. I am here in opposition to [LD 1536](#) An Act to Amend the Laws Governing Bail.

This bill has huge consequences for the “37% of US adults who reported in 2023 they would have trouble covering a \$400 emergency expense with cash, savings, or credit.”¹

Maine courts in almost every county have backlogs of months or in some cases years. From the perspective of the person charged, even a few days in jail can mean the loss of employment, housing and transportation. If employment is lost, payments cannot be made and all that has been held together with a steady paycheck falls apart.

There are harsh consequences to individuals, but families also suffer especially if the person in jail is the primary breadwinner.

More than 80% of those housed in Maine's jails are there pretrial. That is a stunning number in a country that prides itself on the motto of “innocent until proven guilty.”

We sometimes forget about the taxpayers who are footing the bill for unnecessary pretrial incarceration of low level crimes. Next week this

committee will be hearing a bill requesting the state shoulder more of the burden of county jail costs. The bill before you today will substantially increase the burden on property taxes. If this body decides to transfer that burden to state taxpayers, we still lose.

Those with means will not be effected by this bill. They will pay their fines and fees and be free to rejoin their families and return to work while they await their day in court.

There is something patently undemocratic about money being a prerequisite for freedom instead of the severity of the alleged crime.

I would be grateful for a unanimous ought not to pass vote on this bill.

Thank-you,
Jan

¹ [https://www.federalreserve.gov/publications/2024-economic-well-being-of-us-households-in-2023-expenses.htm#:~:text=Figure%201.,or%20its%20equivalent%20\(by%20year\)&text=Return%20to%20text-,Note:%20Among%20all%20adults.,from%2011%20percent%20in%202021.](https://www.federalreserve.gov/publications/2024-economic-well-being-of-us-households-in-2023-expenses.htm#:~:text=Figure%201.,or%20its%20equivalent%20(by%20year)&text=Return%20to%20text-,Note:%20Among%20all%20adults.,from%2011%20percent%20in%202021.)