

Cheryl Dearman Mills
Wells
LD 1725

Honorable members of the Criminal Justice and Public Safety Committee. My name is Cheryl Dearman Mills and I am a resident of Wells Maine. I am submitting this testimony in opposition to LD 1725, An Act Regarding the Membership of and Requirements for County Jail Boards of Visitors.

I have been a member of the York County Jail Board of Visitors since 2019. As a member of the Maine Prisoner Advocacy Coalition I visited women at the Women's Correctional Center every month for four years. During that time I learned that Maine's correctional system is structured around men's needs and does not take into account the real difference in physical, emotional and mental health needs as well as familial needs of women. These differences also exist in county jail where women are in the minority. The Board of Visitors needs to include the voice and experience of a formerly incarcerated woman in order to provide insight into the needs of female prisoners.

Reducing the number of BOV members from 7 to 5 will weaken the work of the Board by limiting the breadth of experience and diversity needed to perform the duties of the Board.

Now to the portion of the bill that proposes the elimination of the requirement that the Board of Visitors annual report be submitted to this committee : I ask this committee "aren't you interested in what's happening at county jails?" In addition, County Jails should not provide their ownoversight, this committee and the Maine legislature should.

For these reasons I urge you not to move this bill out of committee. Thank you.