

4/23/2025  
LD 1536  
opposed

My name is Luca Mellon, I live in Rockland, and I didn't actually prepare anything for this. I'm here for something else but I'm going to speak about this anyway.

I work right now for a criminal indigent defense attorney. I was a pretrial case manager in Maine for one year in the past. I also worked for Homeworthy (formerly known as the Knox County Homeless Coalition) as a case manager and right now I run my city's emergency warming center. I don't speak on behalf of any of my current or former employers.

In all of the employment that I've just mentioned, I'm working with pretty much the same population in Knox county. The people who are incarcerated in the jail who are still pretrial status and legally innocent are often the same people that I'm seeing staying at our warming center, meaning that they're living on the street homeless. All of the time I've been working in these positions, this bail reform was in effect and there has still been a huge disparity in who's being incarcerated pretrial status in our jails. I think making it even harder for poor people to be released when they haven't been found guilty yet is a step in the wrong direction.

It's very common that people are booked into the jail with no money on them, and definitely not \$60 to pay the bail commissioner's fee. If we're reinstating that \$60 fee as mandatory, a lot of people whom a judge has ordered released on PR bail (no cash needs to be posted) will still be held on the \$60.

I think it's important to leave the decision to judges regarding conditions of release, rather than relying on law enforcement officers to use the option of non-custodial arrest, as mentioned in previous testimonies today. Law enforcement officers don't have the benefit of listening to both sides of an argument. When a judge is deciding a defendant's bail, they hear both the prosecutor's side and the defense attorney's side. The defense attorney, even when it's the "lawyer of the day", has had time to speak to the defendant in jail. So they're taking into account and representing the defendant's actual situation.

It's important that judges are asked to consider: is this person a caregiver? What are their healthcare needs, and what employment will they not be able to return to? Especially with our economic situation here in Maine. A lot of people in jail have valuable skills. Many are skilled tradesmen, lobstermen, working in construction and masonry. I think we need them out for many reasons, including the economic reasons.

Thank you so much.

Luca Mellon  
Rockland