

## Testimony in support of LD 1962 - An Act to Establish the Corrections Ombuds

To the esteemed members of the Criminal Justice & Public Safety Committee,

My name is Earl “Buddy” Bieler. I am incarcerated at the Maine State Prison, and I am here to tell you from the inside, the lack of accountability is impossible to ignore.

Inside prison, everything is done in bulk—mass lockdowns, mass punishment, mass decisions about human beings with no explanation. Entire units can be locked down for days or weeks. Programs stop. Mental health declines. People are left to sit, wait, and deteriorate. And there is no independent place to say, “This isn’t right.” Who is watching the watchers?

Food portions have gotten smaller. Medical requests are delayed or ignored. Grievances are reviewed by the same people complaining about things. That is not oversight. This is the system protecting itself.

Right now, incarcerated people are expected to follow every rule or face consequences immediately, while the institution faces none. There is no neutral body watching patterns, asking hard questions, or holding anyone accountable. That imbalance creates harm, resentment, and unsafe conditions for everyone—prisoners and staff.

An independent ombuds office would change that. It would give people inside, and their families, a safe place to report concerns without fear of retaliation. Retaliation is real. An ombudsman would look at systemic issues instead of dismissing everything as a one big complaint.

This bill is not about being soft on crime. It’s about transparency, dignity, and basic fairness. If incarcerated people are expected to take responsibility for their actions, the institutions overseeing them must be held to the same standard.

I urge you to support LD1962 and bring accountability where it has been missing for far too long.

Thank you,

Earl "Buddy" Bieler

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