

Leslie Manning  
Manchester  
LD 1962

Dear Members of the Criminal Justice and Public Safety Committee,  
Thank you for your service to all the people of Maine. I am Leslie Manning, of Manchester and a volunteer coordinator with MPAC, Maine Prisoner Advocacy Coalition. Since 2018, I have been meeting with women residents at both the Southern Maine Reentry Center and at the Women's Center, listening to and working with them to address their concerns. Our work consists of identifying effective strategies with the appropriate system, whether it is personal, such as health care or systemic and/or policy, such as legislative advocacy and policy discussions with senior staff. In the course of doing this work, we have seen what the lack of transparency and oversight have contributed to the many issues incarcerated women face and the abject failure of a Board of Visitors system to address their issues and problems or provide oversight to the Department. Some examples include health care needs, PREA (Prison Rape Elimination Act) issues and retaliation for addressing issues or using the grievance process to resolve problems. Therefore, we see the need for an independent, outside authority to address on-going and pervasive issues that directly affect the quality of life, or sometimes, death and the Department's stated goals of successful reintegration. Therefore, we urge your support for LD 1962, to create the position of Ombuds for the Department of Corrections. There needs to be accountability and transparency at every level of the system for residents, staff and taxpayers.