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Testimony in Support of LD 1917 to the Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety

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Senator Beebe-Center, Representative Hasenfus, and distinguished members of the Committee:

My name is Peter Lehman and I live in Thomaston. I am a formerly incarcerated citizen and a person in long-term recovery.* I am testifying on behalf of the Maine Prisoner Advocacy Coalition, promoting restorative practices to increase public safety and the health of our communities.

As you are well aware, **any criminal conviction is a life sentence**. With recent development of cheap and easy access to criminal records, and the development of “Business Screening Services” making money using them, any criminal record follows a person like a shadow, haunting their efforts to find work, find housing, and even find recreation.

The “crimes” this bill is concerned with are all for behavior that is no longer criminal, but nevertheless the criminal record haunts people forever. They have paid their price but the punishment continues.

It’s important to emphasize that they have been punished already—we are not suggesting a get out of jail free card. But their criminal record means continuing punishment.

That’s not fair and you have this opportunity to correct it.

I urge you to support LD 1917.

I will be happy to try to answer any questions.

* In the interest of honesty and disclosure, a personal background statement is available on request.