



Patrick W. Polky
Sheriff

KNOX COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE



Curt R. Andrick
Chief Deputy

Testimony of Patrick William Polky, Knox County Sheriff

In Support of LD 2157: "An Act to Prohibit the Unauthorized Use of Drones on or over the Premises of Correctional Facilities and Jails"

Joint Standing Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety

February 12, 2026

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

My name is Patrick Polky. I am the Sheriff of Knox County, and I am submitting this testimony in strong support of LD 2157. While I do not speak for the Maine Sheriffs' Association today, I know there is growing concern among my colleagues about the security gaps this issue presents to our county jails.

The Security Need

In Knox County, we manage a correctional facility that is the backbone of our local public safety. As technology evolves, so do the methods used to bypass our security perimeters. We have seen nationally that unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) are no longer just hobbyist toys; they are tools for conveying contraband—drugs, weapons, and cell phones—directly into the hands of the incarcerated, and for conducting surveillance and information gathering of security layouts and operations.

The rapid advancement of UAV technology has significantly increased these capabilities. Specifically, the rise of First-Person View (FPV) drones—which allow operators to navigate with extreme precision at high speeds—and the ability to override restricted airspace prompts pose unique and evolving threats to correctional operations. LD 2157 provides a necessary legal framework to deter and prosecute those who weaponize our airspace to undermine the safety and security of our correctional facilities. As you are aware, many of our incarcerated individuals participate in Medication Assisted Treatment (MAT), and the introduction of drugs outside of supervised care plans can prove fatal.

Critical Security Concerns for County Jails

- **Precision Contraband Delivery:** Modern UAVs, particularly those used by organized criminal networks, can now carry payloads exceeding 20 pounds. FPV drones allow operators to fly through tight spaces or land directly at cell windows or within narrow recreation yards to deliver drugs, weapons, and electronic contraband like cell phones.

Main Office
 301 Park St.
 Rockland, ME 04841

Correctional Facility
 327 Park St.
 Rockland, ME 04841

Airport Security
 23 Terminal Ln.
 Owls Head, ME 04854

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- **Surveillance and Intelligence Gathering:** Unauthorized drones are often used to monitor staff rotations, identify security vulnerabilities, or track inmate movements. This tactical intelligence can be used to coordinate escapes or plan assaults within the facility.
- **Operational Interference:** When an unidentified drone enters our airspace, it necessitates a facility lockdown. This disrupts essential services, including medical rounds, legal visits, and transports, while diverting limited law enforcement resources to attempt to locate the pilot.
- **Limitations of Current Authority:** Under federal law, drones are classified as "aircraft," which means local authorities are largely prohibited from physically intercepting them in flight. LD 2157 provides the necessary state-level enforcement mechanism to prosecute the operators on the ground.

Addressing the Technical Threat

This bill correctly defines "drones" to include remotely piloted aircraft systems and micro air vehicles. For a county jail, even a "micro" drone can facilitate the delivery of high-potency narcotics, like fentanyl, which poses a lethal risk to our corrections officers and incarcerated individuals. By establishing a Class C crime for flying at or below 400 feet over our premises, this legislation gives my office the clear legal mandate to act when these devices are detected.

Conclusion

LD 2157 is a proactive and necessary step to modernize our criminal code for the 21st century. It ensures that the perimeters of the Knox County Jail and all of our correctional facilities extend vertically, protecting the integrity of our facilities and the safety of staff and the incarcerated in our care. I urge the Committee to vote "Ought to Pass" with the considerations mentioned above.

Thank you for your time and for your commitment to the safety of Maine's citizens.

Respectfully submitted,



Patrick W. Polky
Sheriff, Knox County