Maine PRISONER ADVOCACY Coalition

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**Testimony in opposition to LD 109
to the Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety**
January 30, 2023

Senator Beebee-Center, Representative Salisbury, 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 whose goal is to promote restorative practices in order to increase public safety and the health of our community.

The effect of this bill, LD 109, would be to decrease the number of recovery beds available to those struggling with addictions and to make the those beds more expensive.

Four years ago when this committee was working on this very limited exemption for recovery residences, we learned that we were really talking about whether we needed to require prohibitively expensive sprinkler systems in these group homes. We also learned that the State Fire Marshall's office did not oppose the exemption and also did not warn against it.

As a result, the exemption was passed unanimously and the sponsors of this current bill supported it. I haven't heard that anything has changed.

Addiction has not magically disappeared and the challenge of this crisis remains with us. It is not the right time to cast out and cast aside those who desperately need and want this support.

Let's be clear, the kind of supports provided by recovery residences are critical for many people in recovery and perhaps

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

especially for those returning from incarceration—often as a result of their substance use disorder. This is the peer support of a community of others who have the same struggles. Who can identify and help, challenge and guide, and love us until we can learn to love ourselves.

I urge you to defeat LD 109.

I will be happy to answer any questions you have.