



AMERICAN CIVIL LIBERTIES UNION

Maine

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TESTIMONY OF MICHAEL KEBEDE, ESQ.

Ought to Pass – LD 1622

**Resolve, To Reestablish and Continue the
Work of the Criminal Records Review Committee**

JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY

April 27, 2023

Senator Carney, Representative Moonen, and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary, greetings. My name is Michael Kebede, and I am Policy Counsel at the ACLU of Maine, a statewide organization committed to advancing and preserving civil rights and civil liberties guaranteed by the Maine and U.S. Constitutions. On behalf of our members, we urge you to support this bill because it would continue an important process to free Mainers from the debilitating unintended consequences of criminal records, extending the promise of our constitution to all people in our state.

For as long as there have been criminal laws, a criminal record has prevented people from continuing their education, getting housing, a professional license, credit, investments, and other features of a stable, dignified life. The 129th and 130th Legislatures were aware of this problem when they created, and extended, the Criminal Records Review Committee (“the Committee”), a bipartisan group of stakeholders that included advocates, law enforcement, and representatives from the parts of the state responsible for the logistics of criminal records sealing and expungement.¹

In its final report, published in late 2021, the Committee generated three recommendations, one of which was to re-establish the Committee. The ACLU has been a part of this group since October of 2019. We can attest that the group barely scratched the surface of the issue. Automatic sealing, sealing of Class A, B, and C crimes, or consequences for entities that illegally share sealed records – all these issues were left for another day. Almost all of the group’s meetings were

¹ LD 563, Resolve, To Create the Criminal Records Review Committee, 130th Legislature, *available at* www.mainelegislature.org/legis/bills/display_ps.asp?PID=1456&snum=130&paper=&paperId=1&ld=563; 'Resolve, To Create the Criminal Records Review Committee', Committee Amendment to LD 764, An Act To Limit the Dissemination of Certain Criminal Records, 129th Legislature, *available at* http://www.mainelegislature.org/legis/bills/display_ps.asp?PID=1456&snum=129&paper=&paperId=1&ld=764.

consumed with presentations. We learned of the state's byzantine system for storing criminal records, but we hardly discussed substantive options to redress the many unintended consequences of these records. This bill would allow the group to continue building on the work that went before it.

We urge you to vote *ought to pass*.

Thank you for your time and attention.