

Testimony of Lanı Graham, MD, MPH

**IN SUPPORT OF LD 1863**

**An Act to Facilitate the Provision of Medically Appropriate Levels of Care for Clients of Correctional Facilities**

**Presented by Representative Sachs**

**Before the Criminal Justice and Public Safety Committee, May 9 ,2023**

Senator Bee-bee Center, Representative Salisbury and Members of the Criminal Justice and Public Affairs Committee, my name is Lanı Graham. I am a former Chief Public health Officer for Maine. I serve on the Public Health Committee of the Maine Medical Association I live in Freeport. I support this bill for four reasons.

First, from a medical perspective, it is important to assure that people in the custody of the taxpayer, receive appropriate medical care. I don't think that anyone believes that people held in our care should, in addition to losing their freedom, also receive inadequate care that could prove to be de facto death sentences for them. This bill makes certain that standards for appropriate care are met, whether you are behind bars or in the community.

Second, from a public health safety perspective, those who would be eligible to be transferred to community settings for care are long past the time when they would pose any risk to others. They are in fragile health and may even be demented. All data indicates that criminal actions decline as people age<sup>1</sup>. Nevertheless, individuals transferred to the community under this system, would still be in the custody of the Department of Corrections and if problems developed, regardless of their physical or mental state, they could always be transferred out of the community and back behind bars.

Third, Maine along with every other state is having a greater and greater challenge dealing with older prison residents. In the 1980's

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[https://www.cjcj.org/media/import/documents/recidivism\\_among\\_older\\_adults\\_correlates\\_of\\_prison\\_reentry.pdf](https://www.cjcj.org/media/import/documents/recidivism_among_older_adults_correlates_of_prison_reentry.pdf)

across the country there was a “tough on crime” policy initiated which resulted in longer sentences being delivered for every infraction. Many of these people, incarcerated decades ago are now in their 50’s or 60’s. This problem is only expected to get worse as time marches on. Furthermore, this aging population can be expected to have the usual chronic illnesses of any aging population, which are difficult and often expensive to manage effectively. This bill offers the option of more creative uses of MaineCare which can reduce expenses for Maine taxpayers, but also increase the quality of care. Other states are acting on this issue and having success. California, Connecticut, Virginia, Nevada, and other states are currently experimenting with models for better care of these challenging residents. All these states have reduced their prison costs and improved care.

Last, from the point of view of compassion, doesn’t it seem reasonable to make sure that as many people as possible who are near the end of their lives, are able to spend what time they have left with loved ones. This means much to those incarcerated, but also to those who love them.

I hope you will support this bill unanimously and move Maine forward in this important area of concern.

Thank you for your attention. I would be pleased to answer any questions you have.