

Maine PRISONER ADVOCACY Coalition



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Testimony in support of LD 2269 to the Committee on the Judiciary March 15, 2024

Senator Carney, Representative Moonen, 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.

As you know, the reality of our legal system is that a person convicted of a crime receives a life sentence because we make criminal records so publicly available. This is unheard of in most countries. Making those records freely available is seen as cruel and unusual in most countries and a violation of human rights in the European Union.

We in Maine have begun to address this issue by allowing for the sealing of the record of minor class E offenses after four years with no further offenses. In our view, this was an excellent beginning.

This bill improves that important statute by adding specific crimes related to marijuana possession and cultivation. We urge you to support this change.

You know how important this is and how it can change the lives of many Mainers.

Please note that this bill does not change the waiting period—at least four years must have passed without a further criminal conviction.

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

Please also note that neither this bill nor others before us today “expunge” any record. The record is simply made confidential—it is still available to law enforcement and the courts.

This bill also creates a process for **automatic** sealing of relevant records—a process which we have pushed for in previous legislation and on the Criminal Records Committee.

This process will make an enormous difference for many Mainers.

We strongly urge you to support LD 2269.

Thank you for your generous attention.

I’d be happy to try to answer questions.