

# Maine PRISONER ADVOCACY Coalition



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## **Testimony Neither For nor Against LD 42 to the Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety**

January 27, 2025

Senator Beebe-Center, Representative Hasenfus, 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 neither for nor against LD 42 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.

This bill allows youth ages 18 to 21 who the Juvenile Court has bound over to be tried as an adult whose trial has not begun to be housed in a DOC juvenile facility until their trial actually begins or they are sentenced.

MPAC's position is that while this may be more humane than being held in an adult facility it is nonetheless **inhumane and unacceptable for juveniles to be tried as adults.**

The premise of juvenile justice is that youth cannot be held responsible because they are not yet capable of making binding decisions or understanding the long-term consequences of their actions. This premise is reflected in age of consent laws, voting laws, limits on purchasing or consuming substances, driving and other licensing laws, not being able to enter into binding contracts, and many others.

Trying juveniles as adults is to treat them as if they were beasts or animals needing to be "put down" rather than human beings.

Moreover, we know that race, ethnicity, religion, socio-economic status and many other characteristics are applied in these decisions to try youth as adults. This compounds the violation of **fundamental human rights.**

We ask you to remedy this deplorable situation.

Thank you for your attention. I'm happy to try to answer any questions.

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