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February 7, 2025

Senator Anne Beebe-Center, Chair
Representative Tavis Hasenfus, Chair
Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety
100 State House Station, Room 436
Augusta, ME 04330

PO Box 7157 Lewiston, ME 04240 (207) 520-9180

RE: LD 244- An Act to Provide Safe, Short-term Housing to Indigent Individuals Recently Released from Correctional Facilities

Dear Senator Beebe-Center, Representative Hasenfus, and Members of the Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety:

I am writing to you today in two roles: I serve as the executive director of Maine Pretrial Services, Inc. (MPS), and am also a member of the board of directors for the Maine Reentry Network (MERN). Both MPS and MERN support LD 244, *An Act to Provide Safe, Short-Term Housing to Individuals Recently Released from Correctional Facilities*.

As you are aware, MERN exists to liaison between Maine's communities and those who have been separated from them for any reason, most commonly incarceration or substance use disorder. Our belief that reconciliation and reintegration of all who live within Maine's borders into full community membership leads to reduced relapse and recidivism, which in turn leads to a more prosperous Maine.

LD 244's focus on safe, short-term housing for indigent people released from correctional facilities accomplishes just that-reintegration, safely and responsibly. Study after study clearly shows that the period immediately following release offers two pathways: thoughtful, supportive, intentional decision making or an all too speedy return to recidivism, re-arrest and re-incarceration.

LD 244 provides support for people to maintain and strengthen recovery from substance use disorder, approach secure and meaningful employment, reconnect safely with community and family members, access critically important medical, behavioral health, and social service supports, and build a positive rental history.

Breaking the cycle of incarceration/release/recidivism/and re-incarceration is fiscally responsible. Too many smart people have too much reliable data to ignore the waste and expense of the cycle of incarceration. The human costs match the economic costs, not to mention the cost to communities, which will fare far better with stable, well-resourced individuals returning to Maine's villages, towns, and cities.

Thank you for your serious consideration of this important bill.

Respectfully Submitted,

Elizabeth Simoni
Executive Director, Maine Pretrial Services, Inc.
Maine Reentry Network Board Member