



AMERICAN CIVIL LIBERTIES UNION

Maine

TESTIMONY OF MICHAEL KEBEDE, ESQ.

LD 259 – Ought to Pass

**An Act to Establish the Criminal Records
Review Commission in Statute**

Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary

February 12, 2025

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Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn, and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary, greetings. My name is Michael Kebede, and I am Policy Director 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 sustained, 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.

In its most recent report, published late last year, the Committee generated well over a dozen recommendations, one of which was to re-establish the Committee.¹ The ACLU has been a part of this group since October of 2019. We can attest that the group barely scratched the surface of records sealing. The applicability to adult records of the automatic process of sealing juvenile records, consequences for entities that illegally share sealed records – all these and other issues were unaddressed. This bill would allow the group to continue building on its own work.

We urge you to support LD 259.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

¹ Criminal Records Review Committee, Final Report, “Recommendation G”, at 40, Dec. 2024, OPLA, available at <https://legislature.maine.gov/criminal-records-review-committee>.