

# Maine PRISONER ADVOCACY Coalition



*Peter M. Lehman, PhD*  
20 Lawrence Ave.  
Thomaston, Maine 04861  
(207) 542-1496  
Peter@GrowInME.com

## **Testimony in support of LD 259 to the Committee on the Judiciary**

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Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn, 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.

This is a relatively new problem. Following the development of computer criminal records databases we decided, often without much thought, to make them freely available to the public for whatever reason.

The result has been placing a huge **new** burden on those with criminal records, in effect, increasing and extending their sentence.

We in Maine have begun to address these issues by creating a temporary Criminal Records Committee and then renewing that committee several times.

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

The experience of those of us who have served on those Committees is that the subject is too complex with too many subtleties for members to master in a short time.

In addition, we have come to realize that the that the issues involved are so fundamental to achieving justice that on-going study and careful, temperate action is necessary.

We need an ongoing group to struggle with these issues and bring thoughtful and reasoned recommendations back to the legislature.

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

We urge you to support LD 259.

Thank you for your generous attention.

I'd be happy to try to answer questions.