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Testimony of Representative Grayson Lookner introducing
**LD 419, An Act to Increase the Transparency and Accountability of the Maine
Information and Analysis Center**
Before the Joint Standing Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety

Good morning Senator Beebe-Center, Representative Hasenfus and esteemed members of the Criminal Justice and Public Safety Committee. My name is Grayson Lookner, and I represent House District 113, which includes part of Portland. I am here today to present **LD 419, An Act to Increase the Transparency and Accountability of the Maine Information and Analysis Center (MIAC)**.

This bill is about protecting the civil liberties of Mainers to be free from government surveillance, and ensuring that government agencies, particularly the MIAC, do not overstep their authority or violate the constitutional rights of the people they are meant to serve. The MIAC was originally created as a counter-terrorism agency tasked with identifying and preventing threats to public safety. However, it has strayed far from that mission. Instead of focusing on genuine threats, the MIAC has turned its attention to surveilling Mainers engaged in lawful, protected activities—activities that are at the very heart of our democracy.

The MIAC has been found to encroach on the civil liberties of Mainers by unlawfully surveilling individuals engaged in protected First Amendment activities. This includes Mainers protesting the expansion of power lines in the North Maine Woods and advocating for racial justice in communities across the state. These are not acts of terrorism; these are citizens exercising their constitutional rights to free speech and peaceful assembly. Yet, the MIAC has treated them as subjects of suspicion, collecting and sharing their information without justification.

Even more alarming is the fact that this information has been shared with private entities like Hannaford and Central Maine Power. If private corporations have access to this data, the public deserves to know why and how it is being used. This lack of transparency is a direct threat to civil liberties and undermines the trust between Mainers and their government. The MIAC was

created to protect us, not to spy on us. Its current practices are a betrayal of its original mission and a violation of the public trust.

The recent whistleblower case against the Maine State Police, which exposed MIAC's unlawful collection and sharing of information, is a stark reminder of the dangers of unchecked government surveillance. This is not how a free society operates. We cannot allow an agency tasked with public safety to become a tool for suppressing dissent and targeting lawful activities. The MIAC's actions are not just a breach of privacy—they are a violation of the fundamental rights enshrined in our Constitution.

The tragic events of the Lewiston shooting further underscore the need for this bill. The MIAC has repeatedly told this committee—and the public—that it was established to facilitate communication between the military, intelligence agencies, other government entities, and state and local law enforcement. They have even claimed to have diffused and prevented similar situations in the past. Yet, during the Lewiston crisis—a scenario that perfectly aligned with their stated mission—the MIAC was nowhere to be found. Their absence during one of the most critical moments in Maine's recent history raises serious questions about their effectiveness, priorities, and oversight. If the MIAC cannot fulfill its core mission during a crisis, what is its purpose? This failure demonstrates the urgent need for the transparency and accountability that LD 419 would provide.

LD 419 addresses these violations and failures head-on by creating an auditor position within the Attorney General's office. This auditor would provide independent oversight of MIAC's activities, ensuring that the agency operates within the bounds of the law and respects the civil liberties of all Mainers. The auditor would also address the lack of accountability in how MIAC shares information with private-sector entities. If information is shared with private companies, the public must have access to it as well. Transparency is not optional—it is essential to preserving our freedoms.

I want to acknowledge the Maine State Police for their willingness to engage in this process. They have expressed to me that they already do much of what is required in this legislation and that it might even be beneficial to them. I am confident that we can work together to craft legislation that protects civil liberties while enhancing public trust in the MIAC.

In closing, I urge this committee to support LD 419. This bill is about more than oversight—it is about safeguarding the constitutional rights of Mainers, ensuring that the MIAC returns to its original mission of protecting public safety, and holding the agency accountable for its failures. The Lewiston shooting was a stark reminder of what happens when oversight is lacking. Let's not wait for another tragedy to act.

Thank you for your time and consideration, and I look forward to working with all of you to pass this critical legislation.