



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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Testimony in support of

LD 717, An Act to Amend the Maine Criminal Code Governing Restitution to Include the Costs of All Analyses of Suspected Illegal Drugs

Presented by Rep. Steve Bishop

March 17, 2025

Joint Standing Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety

Good morning Senator Beebe-Center, Representative Hasenfus, and members of the Criminal Justice and Public Safety Committee. My name is Steve Bishop and I represent the residents of Bucksport, Orland, Penobscot, and Verona Island in House District 17. Prior to my service in the Maine House, I served with the Bucksport Police Department and as Deputy Mayor for the town of Bucksport. I am pleased to introduce LD 717, An An Act to Amend the Maine Criminal Code Governing Restitution to Include the Costs of All Analyses of Suspected Illegal Drugs.

The purpose of LD 717 is to remove the cost of criminal actions from the responsibility of Maine taxpayers. Taxpayers did not have to pay for these costs until just a few years ago when a new law was passed by the Maine legislature. Because of that law, in today's current circumstances, if an individual chooses to possess illegal drugs and are subject to violation by law enforcement, the cost of the testing required for prosecution falls on the shoulders of taxpayers. I believe this is the wrong use of our local taxpayer dollars.

All drug prosecution cases require verification and testing. This is done through the state lab. Under the current system, the state lab must bill municipalities, counties, and other state agencies, such as the Maine State Police, for the services they provide.

Small Maine municipalities with small populations of approximately 5,000 people and police departments with approximately 10 officers are having to add line items to their budget allocating monies for annual drug testing. In some cases, this amount can run as high as



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\$10,000. This is simply not right. Offenders possessing illegal drugs must be held responsible for their actions. It is not the place for citizens in Maine to front the cost of illegal drug actions of others.

It is a foundation of the recovery community to accept responsibility. Often at the onset of police interaction with drug offenders open doors to recovery. The consequences of drug activity belong to the offender. These actions should not be burdened to the tax payer.

Thank you for the opportunity to present this bill to the committee. I am happy to answer any questions the committee may have.