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Testimony of Representative Nina Milliken presenting

LD 533, An Act to Allow Residents of the Department of Corrections to Opt In to Additional Restitution for Their Victims

Before the Joint Standing Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety

Good afternoon, Senator Beebe-Center, Representative Hasenfus, and friends and colleagues on the best committee in the Maine Legislature, Criminal Justice and Public Safety. My name is Nina Milliken and I am lucky to represent the people of the towns of Blue Hill, Brooksville, Castine, Sedgwick, Surry and Trenton in the Maine House. I am happy to be here today to present my bill **LD 533, An Act to Allow Residents of the Department of Corrections to Opt In to Additional Restitution for Their Victims**.

As you all know, over the last couple years I have spent a great deal of time in the different Department of Corrections (DOC) facilities. Many of the folks that I have met in the prisons in Maine are extremely remorseful for the various offenses that they have committed and many of them do work every day within the prison setting to do what they can to make amends to the communities that they have harmed. One example of this is the farm and bakery at Mountain View where the men produce incredible food and much of it is sent out to local food pantries.

Some of the men who feel such remorse also have jobs and some of those jobs, as we have heard, pay quite well. Residents have expressed an interest in making reparations to their victims and the purpose of this bill is to provide them a mechanism to do just that.

Currently, the Department has an apology letter program that allows residents of DOC to send an apology letter to DOC Victim Services for the victims of their crimes. When victim services receive these types of letters, they will reach out to the victims to let them know that the letter exists. Then they will hold onto the letter for the victim in case the victim ever wants to receive the letter and read it. This bill is modeled after the apology letter program. The bill would allow the resident to send money to the Office of Victim Services. The victim would be notified that there was money. And then the victim would have five years to decide whether or not they would like to receive the money. If they don't take the money within five years, the money would be deposited into the Victims' Compensation Fund.

The resident could not get the money back once they sent it. They would not be notified about whether or not the victim took the money. They would not know if the money went to the

Victims' Compensation Fund. And they could not opt into sending the money until they have paid off all of their other restitution payments and fines that are imposed by the courts.

This language was drafted with the support of the Maine DOC Office of Victim Services, Maine Coalition to End Domestic Violence, a representative from the Victims' Compensation Fund, part of the Attorney General's Office, and a resident of Maine State Prison. I believe strongly that this language keeps victims' safety and wellbeing as the top priority while simultaneously allowing offenders to make amends as they are willing and able to by providing their victims monetary support.

I hope that you will vote to pass on this bill. I am happy to answer any questions.