



# Maine Sheriffs' Association

*"One Team, One Mission"*

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March 24, 2025

**TESTIMONY OF  
SHERIFF JOEL MERRY  
MAINE SHERIFFS ASSOCIATION**

**LD 647 – An Act Regarding Telephone and Video Call Access in Detention  
and Correctional Facilities and Jails**

Senator Beebe-Center, Representative Hasenfus, and esteemed members of the Joint Standing Committee of Criminal Justice and Public Safety. My name is Sheriff Joel Merry. I am the Sheriff of Sagadahoc County and I am here on behalf of the Maine Sheriffs Association.

Your Maine Sheriffs have taken the unanimous position of **OPPOSITION** for LD 647 – An Act Regarding Telephone and Video Call Access in Detention and Correctional Facilities and Jails.

This bill will have a significant impact on county taxpayers if passed. Due to a recent FCC ruling, the fees charged to our residents have been greatly reduced. While the intent of this legislation appears to be beneficial to our incarcerated populations, it fails to recognize where telephone fees are used and the unintended and negative impact it would have on these individuals.

Maine jails do not charge residents any fees for communicating with their legal counsel. Fees are incurred when personal calls take place only. All funds received from these calls go directly into that jail's Inmate Benefit Fund or IBF. By eliminating these fees, you're eliminating the purchase of rec room equipment, televisions, games, and books. Items that aren't included in jail budgets.

It's important to understand what services are provided to anyone incarcerated at one of Maine's fifteen jails. Every single inmate is equipped with a tablet for their own use. These tablets have been programmed with books, movies, games, educational tools, and full access to all their legal records. The only time a resident would not be furnished with their own tablet is when that person has been violent or abusive towards people or belongings. If that person becomes stabilized, they will receive a tablet.

As you've now heard several times this session, Maine jails are underfunded and understaffed. Video calls cost time and money. Staff must assist residents when making these calls. Mandating that jails provide these services will further burden an already overstressed system. Keeping track of minutes to roll over may seem uncomplicated, but staff will be tasked with recording minutes.

If jails are forced to absorb the costs of the additional requirements in L.D. 647, there is no other way to fund these expenditures other than burdening our local taxpayers. Maine Sheriffs urge you to vote Ought Not To Pass. I am happy to answer any questions you may have.