

Maine PRISONER ADVOCACY Coalition



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Testimony in support of LD 822 to the Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety

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Senator Beebe-Center, Representative Hasenfus, 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 in support of LD 179 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.

The Maine Department of Corrections should have submitted this bill as part of their new model of corrections: “promoting the safety and wellbeing of staff and clients, while also ensuring community clients see **fewer barriers** as they meaningfully engage with rehabilitative-focused services.”

(<https://www.maine.gov/corrections/acc>)

Various fees levied on probationers are **barriers** to successful rehabilitation. These fees may seem low and trivial, but to the person struggling to get their life on track they can loom large.

Picture a probationer, newly released from a county jail or from a DOC facility, struggling to build a new life. They need a place to live and a place to work to build a new life. Often with almost no resources. Probation is designed to help with that, using “targeted treatment and program interventions to reduce criminal behavior and promote pro-social behaviors.”

In contrast, the fees are an incentive to find scarce cash illegally in the black market or in shady deals or stealing. And to feel bad about yourself.

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

In addition, there are fees to travel to see their loved ones and family supports. These add insult to injury and send exactly the wrong message.

Fees send the message that the probationer is a profit center—a way for the Department to make money—rather than a valued client to be supported for their own worth and dignity.

We urge you to change the message by supporting LD 822.