

Maine PRISONER ADVOCACY Coalition



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Testimony in support of LD 1266 to the Committee on Judiciary

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Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn, 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 1266 on behalf of the Maine Prisoner Advocacy Coalition.

I am also the Board Chair and founding member of the Maine Reentry Network.

Working with people reentering from prison, we say that “reentry must begin on day one,” meaning that from the very beginning of their incarceration the goal is return to the community as a productive and successful member.

A few years ago, we realized that this should mean that we take advantage of **early contact** with the criminal legal system to promote the same goals—a return to the community as a productive and successful member.

This is exactly what the treatment courts successfully do! They foster real, positive change.

Our role is providing trained, intentional peer support to women and men in the treatment courts. Using the insights and experiences of those who have successfully reentered to support those in the process.

Of course, this saves money since success here means huge savings in future court and corrections costs. But more importantly, this is the right thing to do: reaching out a hand to support people turning their lives around, supporting them and their families in moving forward. In creating **positive consequences** at the magic moment with the greatest leverage.

We urge you to join us in supporting this important work.

Thank you for your attention. I will be happy to try to answer questions.

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