

April 14, 2025

Good afternoon, Senator Ingwersen, Representative Meyer and esteemed members of the Health and Human Services Committee,

My name is Kandie Cleaves. I am a resident of Garland, and I am a Region 3 at-large Representative, for the Consumer Council System of Maine. As well as the Greater Bangor Area Chair, and Vice President of the Statewide Board. I am also a member of The Board of Visitors for the Penobscot County Jail. I am here today to testify in strong support of **LD 1416: "An Act to Require the Department of Health and Human Services to Immediately Take Custody of Persons Sentenced to Mental Health Facilities That May Not Include County or Regional Jails."**

The Consumer Council System of Maine is a public instrumentality written into State Statute by the Maine Legislature to serve in an advisory capacity and to provide legislators with guidance and advice regarding the delivery of effective and appropriate adult mental health services and those served by them.

The Board of Visitors is also written into State Statute by the Legislature. We are tasked with making recommendations to the sheriff regarding services or treatment for residents of the jail who have mental health challenges or are mentally ill.

It has been a consistent concern to myself and others to watch our jails become an untrained, underfunded provider to house our mental health peers. This is not what jails are designed for nor what those working within corrections hired on for. Corrections in and of itself is already a difficult field to work in, being forced to supervise people they are not properly trained for puts them and our peers at risk.

Our peers who have become incarcerated need to be housed in a facility designed to provide the services they need with staff properly trained to provide it. By doing this we have a better chance of helping them work towards not finding themselves back in the system and being able to lead productive lives once they are out.

At no time should we hear that one of our sheriffs had come to the point of pounding his desk with his fist in desperation and begging the state to place someone in an appropriate placement after they have been blue papered. Our sheriffs and their administrations should not have to make multiple calls a day trying to find beds for people in need of mental health services or pleading with others to place them. The state should be working with them in a timelier fashion to make this happen and LD 1416 will help make this happen by requiring placement within 30 days and specifically excluding jails as appropriate placement.

In closing, thank you for your time and consideration, please support **LD1416**.

Kandie Cleaves

Garland