



**Maine Medical
Association**



**TESTIMONY OF THE MAINE MEDICAL ASSOCIATION
AND
THE MAINE OSTEOPATHIC ASSOCIATION**

In Support of

**LD 740- An Act to Establish a Comprehensive Program to Divert Youth from the
Criminal Justice System and Address Their Needs**

Joint Standing Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety
Room 436, State House, Augusta, Maine
Thursday, April 17th, 2025

Good Afternoon, Senator Beebe-Center, Representative Hasenfus, and Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety. My name is Lani Graham. I am here in support of LD 940 as a public health expert and as a physician interested in healing. I am submitting this testimony in support of LD 740 on behalf of the Maine Medical Association and the Maine Osteopathic Association.

The Maine Medical Association (MMA) is a professional organization representing more than 4,000 physicians, residents, and medical students in Maine. MMA's mission is to support Maine physicians, advance the quality of medicine in Maine, and promote the health of all Maine people. The Maine Osteopathic Association (MOA) is a professional organization representing more than 1,200 osteopathic physicians, residents, and medical students in Maine whose mission is to serve the Osteopathic profession of the State of Maine through a coordinated effort of professional education, advocacy, and member services in order to ensure the availability of quality osteopathic health care to the people of this State.

The MMA and MOA's legislative committees have joined to advocate with one voice in support of LD 740.

This bill directs appropriate attention to a group for which an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. Our future depends on making every effort to ensure that we have healthy children ready to assume the challenges of adult life.

Any physician will tell you that children's brain development is incomplete until about age 25. Until then, the prefrontal cortex, responsible for decision-making and judgment, is not completely developed. As any parent will tell you, a lack of full development can lead to poor decisions that people later laugh about or decisions that can ruin a life. This bill is geared to thoughtfully addressing that problem by identifying youth who may have made poor decisions and ensuring that those young people get the help they need while there is still time for a good outcome.

The American Public Health Association has taken a strong stand about the adverse effects of the carceral system in general, advocating for putting resources into the social determinants of health, such as homelessness, poor nutrition, and lack of education.¹ Research shows that incarceration can have a lasting adverse impact on mental health.² It seems clear that an investment in the health of the youth of Maine through proper evaluation and support is far better than locking them up.

Thank you for your attention. I hope this bill will get your unanimous support. I'd be pleased to answer any questions you might have.

Thank you,

Lani Graham, MD

¹ <https://www.apha.org/policies-and-advocacy/public-health-policy-statements/policy-database/2022/01/07/advancing-public-health-interventions-to-address-the-harms-of-the-carceral-system>

² <https://www.prisonpolicy.org/blog/2021/05/13/mentalhealthimpacts/>