

I  
~~Susan Hawes~~  
Portland, Maine

April 28, 2025

Testimony in Opposition to  
LD 1725 An Act Regarding the Membership of and  
Requirements for County Jail Boards of Visitors

Dear Senator Beebe-Center, Representative Hasenfus, and Members of the Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety:

My name is Sue Hawes. I am from Portland. For eleven years, my husband was a Corrections Officer and later, Deputy Sheriff, at Cumberland County Jail.

I oppose this bill because it changes the number of members on boards of visitors of jails from 7 to "5 or more" and removes requirements that board members meet specific criteria, among other concerns. I believe the current membership is sufficient and request that the committee continue to require a range of expertise on our County Jail Boards of Visitors.

If the committee finds the County Jail Boards of Visitors annual report insufficient or ineffective, removing the reporting requirements seems overkill and unlikely to improve our county jails.

This bill shockingly removes the requirement that a board of visitors appear before the joint standing committee of the Legislature upon request. What could be more important than accountability to the committee of jurisdiction?

These Boards of Visitors are the citizen oversight of our county jails. They review the management of the jail and inspect the jail, interview staff and inmate, make recommendations to the sheriff regarding services or treatment for prisoners who have mental health challenges or are mentally ill, etc. The Board is a critically important part of the county jail system.

I hope the committee will vote unanimously Ought Not to Pass or convert this bill into an amendment clarifying the reporting needs which will better serve the Criminal Justice and Public Safety Committee.

Thank you for your time. I'd be happy to try to answer any questions you may have.