



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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Good morning, Senator Beebe-Center, Representative Hasenfus, and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety. I am Representative Bob Nutting, and I am proud to represent the citizens of Starks, Mercer, Smithfield, Oakland, and a part of Sidney. I am here today to present **LD 1725, "An Act Regarding the Membership of and Requirements for County Jail Boards of Visitors"**.

In the 131st Legislature, this committee worked on LD 1626. Subsequently it passed both the House and the Senate, and the Governor allowed it to become law without her signature. During the public hearing, the Maine County Commissioners Association spoke against its passage. They testified that "LD 1626 proposes to take the far more prescriptive standards governing the boards of visitors of state correctional facilities and apply those same standards to the boards of visitors for county jail facilities". They reminded us that these county jail boards are made up of volunteers and concluded that LD 1626 might discourage people from serving on them.

Fast forward to January of this year, and I was made aware that some of the problems that they envisioned have come to pass. Sheriffs have been forced to remove (fire) volunteer members if they didn't fit specific criteria. In other cases, it has been very difficult to recruit volunteers with the specific qualities prescribed in the law because of LD 1626.

The intent of the bill enacted in 2023 was not questioned by anyone, but the unintended consequences need to be corrected so that these boards can continue to be as valuable which they generally are.

My bill changes the number of members on boards of visitors of jails from 7 to 5 or more. It removes requirements that board members meet specific criteria. It requires a board of visitors to provide a copy of its annual report to the county sheriff but removes the requirement that a board of visitors provide a copy of its annual report to the joint standing committee of the Legislature having jurisdiction over criminal justice and public safety matters and it removes the requirement that the sheriff provide copies with the sheriff's response to the reports to the joint standing committee of the Legislature having jurisdiction over criminal justice and public safety matters. It also removes the requirement that a board of visitors appear before the joint standing committee of the Legislature having jurisdiction over criminal justice and public safety matters upon request.

Thank you. I would be happy to take your questions.

Robert W. Nutting
State Representative

District 66 Oakland, Mercer, Smithfield, Starks & Sidney (part)