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THE MAINE SENATE  
132<sup>nd</sup> Legislature

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## **LD 1773, "An Act to Criminalize Certain Offenses Related to Gift Card Thefts"**

### **Joint Standing Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety**

**April 30, 2025**

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

I am Matt Harrington; and I represent Senate District 33, which includes the municipalities of Alfred, Lebanon, Sanford and Waterboro. I am pleased to present LD 1773, "An Act to Criminalize Certain Offenses Related to Gift Card Thefts."

This legislation addresses a growing and troubling trend impacting both Maine consumers and Maine businesses — organized schemes targeting retail gift cards.

Over the past several years, retail gift cards have consistently been among the most requested gifts for holidays, birthdays and other special occasions. Unfortunately, their popularity has made them a prime target for sophisticated criminal operations. Organized groups steal unactivated gift cards from store shelves, tamper with their barcodes and then return them to stores. Once an unsuspecting customer purchases and activates one of these compromised cards, scammers — often operating from overseas — quickly drain the funds, leaving recipients with worthless cards and retailers facing difficult refund decisions.

This practice harms Maine consumers at a very personal level, turning what should be a thoughtful gift into a frustrating experience. It also imposes real financial costs on Maine's retailers, many of whom step in to make customers whole, absorbing the losses caused by criminal fraud. Maine is not immune to trends that have been growing along major corridors like I-95 and across New England. We must take proactive steps to protect both consumers and businesses before this problem becomes even more widespread.

While similar efforts are underway in other states, including New Hampshire, LD 1773 represents a Maine-based solution. It is more modest in scope and helps categorize this type of crime within Maine's organized retail theft statute. We worked collaboratively with retailers and prosecutors on the language within LD 1773. This bill will give loss prevention, law enforcement and prosecutors the basic tools they need to hold offenders accountable. It also sends a strong message that Maine will not be a safe haven for this type of organized retail fraud.

I appreciate the work that industry groups, law enforcement and retailers have done to raise awareness of this issue. Their insights have helped shape this measured proposal, ensuring it addresses the real-world needs without placing unnecessary burdens on honest businesses.

I respectfully ask for your support in advancing LD 1773 to help safeguard Maine consumers, Maine businesses and Maine's economy.

Thank you for your time and consideration and I would be happy to answer any questions.