



TESTIMONY OF MOLLY CURREN ROWLES, ESQ.
LD 2176 – Ought to Pass

An Act to Create a Right to Judicial Review Under the Maine Civil Rights Act for Persons Erroneously Detained

Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary

February 10, 2026

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Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn, and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary, greetings. My name is Molly Curren Rowles, and I am the Executive Director of the American Civil Liberties Union of Maine, a statewide organization committed to advancing and preserving civil liberties guaranteed by the Maine and U.S. Constitutions. On behalf of our members, I urge you to support LD 2176.

Section 1 of this legislation clarifies that unlawful detention constitutes a violation of the Maine Civil Rights Act. The Maine Civil Rights Act has long served as one of our state's most important expressions of our values, demonstrating the state's commitment to rejecting discrimination and upholding civil rights. Since its enactment, Maine people have relied on the Maine Civil Rights Act to challenge impermissible infringements on their rights, and this Legislature has routinely clarified the Act to ensure it serves its ultimate purpose.

The clarification outlined in LD 2176 is particularly important because unlawful deprivation of a personal liberty is at the core of the writ of habeas corpus. Habeas corpus is intended to prevent arbitrary government detention by ensuring that those unlawfully deprived of their liberty by the government can challenge that deprivation.

This bill does not create new rights or expand the Maine Civil Rights Act. It seeks to provide clarity about the operation of the Maine Civil Rights Act, so courts, law enforcement, and the public can understand the remedies available when an unlawful detention occurs.

We urge you to vote ought to pass on LD 2176.