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The philosophical approach of the Maine Criminal Justice system, like other states, has become more punitive with an increase in harsher sentences compounded by a lack of rehabilitation and reentry programs. This methodology has failed and the results of this 40-year tough-on-crime approach has almost quadrupled the prison population-with unprecedented expansion in the number of elderly people in prison in the U.S. (124,900). Criminologists and legal scholars have estimated that the prison elderly population will increase nationwide by 4,400% by 2030.

Despite the astronomical increase of the elderly population, in 2011, Maine spent \$17 million dollars on DOC residents' healthcare-a 16% increase from 2007. Notwithstanding this considerable investment, DOC residents are still not receiving the care they need. That reason alone provides justification for passage of LD 476.

In 2018, the Maine prison system had 2,378 people in the custody of the Department of Corrections. Maine State Prison housed just slightly over 1000 residents. There were 310 residents state-wide with serious unresolved health issues, 58% of that number were residents over the age of 50. The realization of an aging population within the DOC led the State to add an assisted living unit at Mountain View Correctional facility and a much needed hospice program at Maine State Prison. Even with the two additions, the MDOC is still not equipped to accommodate an aging populace. Passing LD 476 would help address that concern. The Bill will permit residents and their advocates (including family members and friends) to petition the MDOC for a Medical Eligibility Determination that will authorize the DOC to evaluate the need for assisted living or long-term care in a nursing home for qualified elderly residents.

Wherefore, the MSP NAACP supports LD 476 in its totality.

Respectfully submitted,

Foster Bates

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