

## POSITION STATEMENT IN SUPPORT

### LD 696: An Act To Prohibit Solitary Confinement in Maine's Corrections System

Presented to Maine's Joint Standing Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety  
As the state's largest grassroots mental health advocacy organization, NAMI Maine supports the passage of *An Act to Prohibit Solitary Confinement in Maine's Corrections System*. Solitary confinement is the physical isolation of an individual from others for 22.5 hours or more a day. Solitary confinement has been researched extensively and has been found to have profound negative impacts on individuals' mental and physical health, as well as detrimental impacts on the rehabilitative goals set forth by our criminal justice system. It has also been found to increase the likelihood for future discord and escalation of behaviors that could lead to dangerous situations for both the individuals and corrections officers.

Solitary confinement has been found to increase or exacerbate mental health symptoms. These symptoms include anxiety, stress, depression, problems with concentration and memory, as well as increasing the risk for symptoms of psychosis, and suicidal ideation. Although solitary confinement is typically utilized in terms of containment of behaviors or in punitive measures, it has been found to increase anger, irritability, decrease impulse control, and increase the risk for possible violent outburst. By utilizing solitary confinement, the correction setting is actually increasing the risk for the very reason that the person was placed in it in the first place. Due to these significant mental health concerns and responses, solitary confinement disrupts the very goals of our corrections system when utilized in any way.

Solitary confinement is a correctional tactic and behavior containment strategy that has been utilized for hundreds of years. However it is now outdated, as the research clearly indicates the detrimental impacts it has on an individual's mental health and cognitive abilities. This strategy perpetuates and exacerbates patterns of disruptive and at times aggressive behaviors, creating an unsafe space for all who are in it. Solitary confinement also negatively impacts any progress individuals have made in order to participate in the rehabilitation and treatment of behavior patterns and mental health symptoms. Because of this, NAMI Maine strongly urges you to protect both the inmates and corrections officers in prohibiting the use of solitary confinement.

---

**ABOUT NAMI MAINE:** Incorporated in 1984, the National Alliance on Mental Illness, Maine Chapter (NAMI Maine) is the state's largest grassroots mental health organization. With support from national and regional affiliates, the agency is dedicated to building better lives for everyone impacted by behavioral health concerns. NAMI Maine engages with leaders and community partners at all levels to improve the state's mental health system through collaboration and education.

---

#### LEGISLATIVE CONTACT

Hannah Longley, LCSW, Director of Community Programs  
(207) 622-5767 □ [HannahL@namimaine.org](mailto:HannahL@namimaine.org)

**POSITIONS & POLICY AGENDA**  
[www.namimaine.org/advocacy](http://www.namimaine.org/advocacy)