



Consumer Council System of Maine  
A Voice for Consumers of Mental Health Services

219 Capitol Street, Suite 7  
Augusta, ME 04330

Phone: 207.430.8300  
Fax: 207.430.8301  
Toll-Free: 877.207.5073  
[www.maineccsm.org](http://www.maineccsm.org)

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April 5, 2021

Good Afternoon Senator Warren, Representative Deschambault and honorable members of the Joint Standing Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety.

My name is Vickie McCarty. I am a policy analyst for the Consumer Council System of Maine (CCSM). I am here today on behalf of the CCSM to testify in support of **LD 696: An Act To Prohibit Solitary Confinement in Maine's Corrections System.**

The Consumer Council System of Maine is a public instrumentality written into State Statute by the Maine Legislature to serve in an advisory capacity and to provide legislators with guidance and advice regarding the delivery of effective and appropriate adult mental health services from those served by them.

Thanks to the hard work of many Maine citizens, legislators, and State personnel, we are making progress towards integrating a correctional system that embraces jail diversion, positive re-entry, restorative justice and peer support programs in lieu of perpetuating punitive actions that do harm.

<http://www.rjpmidcoast.org/>

And although there has been some movement to address the issue of solitary confinement, it has not been enough.

Many experts and advocates oppose the practice of placing individuals in solitary confinement citing a growing body of research that has revealed it has very adverse effects on a person's mental health. One of those is Craig Haney, a social psychologist at the University of California, Santa Cruz and author of a 2018 article on the subject in the *Annual Review of Criminology*. In the article, Haney writes that not only are there serious psychological repercussions of solitary confinement, but also that there is an emerging consensus that the practice is costly and ineffective, in that it "does not achieve its intended objectives and may even worsen the



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problems it was designed to solve.”

<https://www.annualreviews.org/doi/full/10.1146/annurev-criminol-032317-092326>

And as described by the Commission on Safety and Abuse in America’s Prisons – “What happens inside jails and prisons does not stay inside jails and prisons. It comes home with prisoners after they are released and with corrections officers at the end of each day’s shift. When people live and work in facilities that are unsafe, unhealthy, unproductive, or inhumane, they carry the effects home with them. We must create safe and productive conditions of confinement not only because it is the right thing to do, but because it influences the safety, health, and prosperity of us all.

Again, we support the overall premise of this bill, however it needs to be strengthened, especially in the area of human contact in order to most effective., To that extent we ask that the bill be carried over as to allow more time to further work on the bill or if an amendment is presented by the legislative sponsor, we urge you to consider that option as well.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

**Vickie McCarty**

CCSM Policy Analyst

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