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April 5, 2021

Senator Susan Deschambault
Representative Charlotte Warren
Committee on Criminal Justice & Public Safety
100 State House Station, Rm. 436
Augusta, ME 04333

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

Dear Senator Deschambault, Representative Warren, and Members of the Committee on Criminal Justice & Public Safety,

MACDL is here today to testify fully in favor and in support of the concept of LD 696 and to recommend to the Chairs of this Committee that this important bill be carried over into the short session to allow more time in the "off season" to craft a bill that fully reflects the intent of the sponsor as well as the needs of the incarcerated people of Maine—in its jails and its prisons.

MACDL looks forward to working with other stakeholders (including the Maine Prisoners Advocacy Coalition, which has worked on issues regarding solitary confinement for longer than anyone here) in crafting a bill that will protect incarcerated people—especially young people, vulnerable people, pregnant people, people struggling with mental illness or mental health crises—from the devastating effects of solitary confinement for both short and long periods. The policies and procedures promulgated by the Department of Corrections are voluminous—they must be reviewed carefully and in light of actual practice in each facility.

In light of monumental legislation in places like Massachusetts and most recently New York, it is important and imperative to take lessons from the passage of such legislation and how progress is made in implementing these changes.

Thank you for your attention to this matter and for allowing me to speak with you all today. I would be happy to answer any questions of the Committee.

With appreciation,

Tina Heather Nadeau, Esq.
MACDL Executive Director