



Maine People's Alliance

Senator Deschambault, Representative Warren, and honorable members of the Joint Standing Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety: thank you for the opportunity to testify today in favor of LD 963.

My name is Cate Blackford. I am the Public Policy Director for the Maine People's Alliance. MPA is Maine's largest community action organization with over 32,000 members across the state. Our mission is to create a world where everyone has what they need, contributes what they can, and no one is left behind.

MPA strongly supports LD 963, which would establish a new residential treatment and recovery facility for first and second generation immigrant youth who have been involved in the juvenile justice system.

As you have heard from the families and community members who have been directly impacted, Maine is in urgent need of a culturally responsive residential treatment and recovery program to help reintegrate young people from immigrant backgrounds into our communities. This bill would follow a model the Department of Corrections already uses with the Opportunity Center. By setting up a partnership with an organization that has the cultural understanding, treatment expertise and trust of the New Mainer community, LD 963 would address specific barriers to rehabilitation, supporting young people in navigating their ways forward through education and the workplace.

The ultimate goal of our juvenile justice systems is to support young people as they manage the challenges they face so they can move forward in achieving their full potential. When a growing number of Maine youth are instead confronting homelessness and other harsh conditions, we all lose out on their talents and gifts and their families often face tragedies.

Maine People's Alliance strongly supports LD 963 and the steps it takes towards leaving no one behind. I urge you to vote Ought to Pass.

I am happy to take any questions.

Thank you for your time.

Cate Blackford
Public Policy Director, Maine People's Alliance
cate@mainepeoplesalliance.org