



17 April 2021

TO: Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety
State House Room 436
100 State House Station
Augusta, ME 04333-0100

RE: LD 1175

Dear Sen. Deschambault, Rep. Warren, and Members of the Committee;

Thank you for the opportunity to voice our support for LD 1175. The Restorative Justice Project Maine's mission is to promote a justice that is community-based, repairs harm, and creates safety and wellbeing for all. We believe that crime is a serious matter that requires a strong community response.

We have a growing problem with jails overcharging inmates for phone calls. "The majority of inmates in our county jails, where phone charges are highest, are people who have not yet gone to trial – demonstrably innocent citizens." Most of them are from poor and low income families who cannot afford this additional expense. Expensive phone calls can be life altering for people in jail and can derail the justice process as well.

When people cannot get together the funds to get out of jail, exorbitant phone rates only make a difficult time even harder. Pretrial detention is an extremely stressful experience. Detainees are often at risk of losing their jobs, housing and even custody of their children. Being locked up, even for a short time, can interrupt medical care and can exacerbate mental health problems. It is no coincidence that suicides risk is highest in the first week of jail. Calls with loved ones are essential for people under these conditions, who may need to coordinate childcare or elder care, make arrangements for missing work, having prescriptions brought to the facility, or simply have someone to talk with while incarcerated.

We, the staff and members of the Board of Directors, believe that LD 1175 is in furtherance of our stated mission and organizational goals, and we therefore enthusiastically support an "ought to pass" vote by the Committee.

Sincerely,

Arthur C. Jones, Ph.D, Belfast; Member, Restorative Justice Project Maine Legislative Committee

Restorative Justice Project

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Arthur Jones
Belfasts, Restorative Justice Project Maine

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