



Christian Civic League of Maine

Senator Deschambault, Representative Warren and members of the Maine Legislature Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety, I am Mike McClellan, Policy Director for the Christian Civic League of Maine. The Christian Civic League of Maine Envisions a state and nation where God is honored, religious freedom flourishes, families thrive, and life is cherished. We believe a Biblical approach works in life and including in governance.

I am here to testify in favor of LD 1175, An Act to Prohibit Excessive Telephone, Video, and Commissary Charges in Maine Jails and Prisons. As you know, Representative Kinney is the sponsor. I am pleased to support this legislation on behalf of CCL Maine. The opportunity this legislation presented allowed my organization to both meet and work with Courtney Allen and ME RAP (Recovery Advocacy Program). We are grateful for that and the work they do in support of loving people.

I attended a Zoom meeting a few months back and heard much compelling, true life accounts of how the current setup (additional fees) for phone usage, and commissary options fees has a negative effect on both inmates and their families. How people in prison and their families had to go without a regular phone contact due to the extra costs associated with the process. I believe it is their testimony you wish to hear today. I want to note that as this legislation has developed, there have been discussions and thoughts about the current setup of the system works and does not work in Maine. CCL Maine clearly does not look at today's discussion as a time of placing blame or fault with any part of the system in question. We are here to simply support making positive change. We believe it is in the best interests of all that the pricing for communications with loved ones and for the ability to utilize the jail or prison commissary is an important component of rehabilitation.

In the lead up to today's discussion there have been concerns about making sure this legislation does not unintentionally make changes that hurt people and their families. An example would be by losing this funding stream, funds are taken from other funds already meant to be supportive resources to make up for the loss of the revenue stream. An actual loss for the inmates. We support crafting this legislation so that it works well. We support a big picture rehabilitative plan that is budgeted for success. Any holes or problems can be amended in the next days if we all agree that the key here is access for the inmate and their family, that our big picture goal is rehabilitation and access to spouse, family, church and/or community is a major factor in the ultimate success of the individual seeking to return home.

Again, thank you for taking this issue up, I look forward to hearing the other testimonies today.

God bless you all,

Mike

