



MAINE ASSOCIATION OF CRIMINAL DEFENSE LAWYERS

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April 14, 2021

Senator Susan Deschambault
Representative Charlotte Warren
Committee on Criminal Justice & Public Safety
100 State House Station Room 436
Augusta, ME 04330

RE: LD 1175 – “An Act to Prohibit Excessive Telephone, Video and Commissary Charges in Maine Jails and Prisons.”

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

MACDL supports LD 1175.

LD 1175 eliminates unnecessary commissions and surcharges from contracts between county jails/prisons and third-party contractors providing services such as phone calls and commissary to detainees.

The preamble to LD 1175 effectively explains how contact with the outside world and basic conveniences through commissary accounts are virtually all that people have to look forward to when incarcerated. This is especially true during the on-going lockdowns from COVID-19 when detainees are sometimes given no more than 1 hour per day outside of the cell with limited counseling and religious services.

Poor Mainers make up a disproportionate number of our detainees given Maine’s continued reliance on an unfair cash bail system. This means that some people are not only unable to come up with bail that is sometimes as little as \$1000 for release, but also unable to afford to make calls to their families once they cannot make bail.

These kinds of basic services are necessary for Maine’s jails and prisons to provide. The decision to hire an outside contractor to provide such services allows jails and prisons to save money. There is no reason they should be making money as well.

For these reasons, MACDL fully supports LD 1175.

Thank you for the opportunity to address this issue.

Sincerely,
/s/ Matthew D. Morgan

Matthew D. Morgan
Member, Legislative Committee