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PORTLAND

Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety:

My name is Morgana Warner-Evans. I'm a resident of Portland. I am testifying in support of LD 1175: An Act to Prohibit Excessive Telephone, Video, and Commissary Charges in Maine State Prisons. Connections with family and friends are important to incarcerated people's emotional and mental health. Excessive cost should not prevent prisoners from connecting with loved ones.

I work for a mental health agency and provide in-home support for adults with serious mental illness. I have observed firsthand how support from family can help people with mental illness learn to manage their diagnoses and move towards recovery. Over fifty percent of state prisoners in the United States are mentally ill. They should be able to receive social and emotional support without worrying about the cost to themselves or their families.

In a rural state, people are not always able to travel to see their loved ones who are incarcerated. Phone and video calls provide an opportunity for connection when in person visits are not possible. LD 1175 ought to pass.