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LD 663, An Act To Make Comprehensive Substance Use Disorder Treatment Available to Maine's Incarcerated Population

April 21, 2021

Chair Deschambault, Chair Warren, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety, my name is Stephen Gorden and in addition to serving as chair of the board of commissioners for Cumberland County, I am writing today in my role as board president of the Maine County Commissioners Association. We appreciate the opportunity to provide testimony to the Committee in neither for nor against LD 663.

About MCCA. Briefly, the Maine County Commissioners Association was established in 1890 to assist Maine's county government in providing vital services to Maine citizens in a responsive, efficient, and credible manner. The Association is based in Augusta and currently represents 15 of Maine's 16 counties and is governed by a board with representation from each participating county.

Our position on LD 663. As we read this bill, it calls for the Department of Health and Human Services to provide a "comprehensive" substance use disorder treatment program in correctional facilities, including MAT services. Having the State provide such important services is helpful. However, in closely reading the bill, we note that these proposed services would only be available in prisons maintained by the State; they would not be available in county jails and detention centers where prisoners have shorter periods of incarceration, and are therefore closer to the community. If this bill does more forward, we would recommended that it be broadened to include county and municipal jails and detention facilities.

Conclusion. We hope this information is helpful to the Committee as it considers LD 663, and we thank the Committee for providing us an opportunity to share our observations on the bill.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Stephen Gorden".

Stephen Gorden
President

cc: Commissioner Brian Hobart, Chair, MCCA Legislative Committee
James I. Cohen, Verrill Dana, LLP, MCCA Legislative Counsel