

**Testimony in Support of LD 1674**  
**Presented by Cushman Anthony**  
**On behalf of the Maine Council of Churches**  
**May 14, 2021**

Senator Deschambault, Representative Warren, and members of the Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety: My name is Cushman Anthony and I live in Yarmouth. I am a retired lawyer and mediator. I was a member of the House of Representatives from 1986 to 1992, and was House Chair of the Select Committee on Corrections during the 115<sup>th</sup> Legislature.

I am submitting this testimony today on behalf of the Maine Council of Churches, the leading organization of Protestant Christian churches in our state. We represent seven denominations statewide which include 437 churches with a total membership of more than 55,000 members. We are working toward a world “where peace is built with justice, and justice is guided by love.”

Maine has a duty to provide health care for individuals who are in its correctional institutions, and the quality of that care has often been less than adequate in the past. This bill takes an important step towards correcting that, by establishing health care committees on which prisoners are members, in all adult facilities that are operated by the Department of Corrections. That is an excellent idea. Just like people on the outside, prisoners should have a strong voice in in their own care.

Another important provision of the bill calls for transportation to and from medical and mental health service appointments to be done by correctional officers of the same gender as the patient. Moreover, the services would be delivered outside of the presence of that correctional officer. Again, this is a good step. Every person is entitled to basic human rights, and that includes individuals who are in State custody.

Also important is the provision that prisoners shall not be required to pay for copies of their own medical records. And, individuals will be able to access medical care even if they do not have adequate funds to pay for those services. These common sense measures recognize that prisoners deserve fair treatment.

The Bible calls us to look after prisoners with compassion and to recognize their basic humanity. This bill moves the state in that direction in some important ways. It deserves to become law