

Maine PRISONER ADVOCACY Coalition



May 14, 2021

Senator Deschambault, Rep Warren and honorable members of the criminal justice and public safety committee. My name is Jan Collins and I am assistant director for the Maine Prisoner Advocacy Coalition. I am here today to speak in favor of [LD 1674](#) An Act To Improve Access to Medical Care for and Expand the Rights of Adult Clients of State Correctional Facilities.

MPAC's mission is to support Maine's incarcerated citizens, their families, and friends in their struggle with Maine's criminal justice system. Our purpose is to reduce Maine's use of incarceration by creating a criminal justice system that is ethical, humane, and restorative in nature.

LD 1674 places in statute several procedures that are considered best practice in medical facilities.

First, the bill establishes residential health care committees in all adult correctional facilities. These health care committees will be able to advocate for preventive health practices that will benefit all residents. Health insurance companies across the country have for years encouraged subscribers to make healthy choices and have been the vehicle for encouragement, education and rewards. Health care in corrections has until now, operated under a model in which health care is something that is done to the resident not something that the resident participated in. These committees will also give residents the skills needed to be their own best health care advocates upon release.

Second, the bill exempts those who meet the Department of Corrections definition of indigent from fees for prescriptions, prosthetic devices, and medical and dental services and provides for

free copies of medical records and test results to inmates. This change is in keeping with the Departments policy of prohibiting inmates from incurring debt and allows inmates access to the information needed to make good decisions about their own health care and healthy choices.

Third, I, as well as members of the public, have cringed to read stories of male corrections officers accompanying female inmates to gynecological exams and even into the delivery room and at times making crude comments during the procedure. It should be without question that female corrections officers should accompany women to exams and that some privacy should be allowed by patients with their physicians. This bill allows for these practices whenever possible.

Lastly, the bill requires the DOC to delineate in policy between searches of property and body cavity searches and to insure that the process for each is trauma informed and gender responsive.

All of these updates are common sense approaches that will improve health care for all and reduce unnecessary trauma for inmates and corrections officers alike.

I ask your unanimous support for [LD 1674](#) An Act To Improve Access to Medical Care for and Expand the Rights of Adult Clients of State Correctional Facilities.

Sincerely,

Jan M. Collins

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Jan Collins
East Wilton/MPAC

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