

## LD 1674 – Support Statement

Honorable members of the Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety:

I am writing in support of LD 1674 – An Act To Improve Access to Medical Care for and Expand the Rights of Adult Clients of State Correctional Facilities.

A fundamental human right is to receive adequate physical and mental healthcare services. As general citizens in society, it is naturally assumed that each patient is the driver of their own healthcare services. Each person has a voice in what services they receive and are expected to have agency enough to address with their healthcare provider any issues that arise. Further, if the care being provided is perceived to be sub-standard, citizens are able to pursue corrective measures to ensure they receive proper care.

Through the act of causing harm in their communities, and breaking established laws, prisoners have forfeited certain rights regarding freedom of movement, search, and seizure. However, prisoners should not be expected to forfeit their right to self-directed healthcare. LD 1674 provides much-needed protections for the inclusion of the voices of Maine’s incarcerated citizens in guiding the quality of their healthcare, while also including the voice of a medical professional unaffiliated with a Maine Department of Corrections (MDOC)-contracted medical service provider, removing conflict of interest concerns.

By including stakeholder voices in the guidance process of medical services, and in assessing the performance of care providers, this bill helps to build agency in incarcerated citizens, while also assisting MDOC in its efforts to provide and protect the provision of adequate healthcare services to those over whom it has charge. Furthermore, by preventing the charging of fees that exceed a client’s ability to pay, this bill protects prisoners from incurring debt while incarcerated—which helps prevent the perpetuation of the cycle of incarceration, often driven by poverty.

Another important aspect of this bill is the protection it provides against re-traumatization of many clients who have suffered through trauma in their youth. By creating an expectation of privacy and dignity, LD 1674 provides a step towards the rehumanization of healthcare in correctional facilities.

In short, LD 1674 – An Act To Improve Access to Medical Care for and Expand the Rights of Adult Clients of State Correctional Facilities stands as a vital step towards protecting the voices, dignity, and well-being of one of Maine’s most vulnerable populations.

Thank you very much for taking the time to read and consider my statement in support of this bill.

Respectfully submitted,

*Leo Hylton*

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