# Testimony in Support of LD 696
## Presented by Cushman Anthony
## On behalf of the Maine Council of Churches
## February 9, 2022

Senator Deschambault, Representative Warren, and members of the Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety: My name is Cushman Anthony. I am a Quaker 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 115th Legislature.

I am speaking today on behalf of the Maine Council of Churches, the leading organization of Protestant Christian churches in our state. The Council has seven member denominations and two associate member churches representing 439 churches with more than 55,000 parishioners across the state. Our Prayer for Justice states that we are working toward "…a world where peace is built with justice, and justice is guided by love."

We support passage of LD 696, An Act to Prohibit Solitary Confinement in Maine's Corrections System.

In our view, solitary confinement is a form of torture. Cutting individuals off from all contact with other people causes significant emotional harm to that person. That harm prevents that person from making rational decisions for a very long period of time. As a consequence, it works against one of the important goals of the corrections system, to return individuals to society more likely to function in accordance with social and legal norms.

There is adequate evidence that people who have been held in solitary confinement are more likely to commit suicide. They are more likely to be violent after their release. In addition, they are more likely to reoffend, and be back in the system again.

Most important to us, it is morally offensive. We have no business engaging in harmful activity because a person has made a mistake while in custody. That is contrary to all that we hold dear.

For these and other reasons, we urge you to pass this important piece of legislation. Thank you.