



Consumer Council System of Maine  
A Voice for Consumers of Mental Health Services

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February 9, 2022

Good morning, Senator Deschambault, Representative Warren and honorable members of the Joint Standing Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety.

## STATEWIDE CONSUMER COUNCIL

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My name is Vickie McCarty. I am the Assistant Director for the Consumer Council System of Maine (CCSM). I am here today on behalf of the CCSM to testify in support of **“LD 696 An Act to Prohibit Solitary Confinement in Maine’s Correctional System”**.

The Consumer Council System of Maine is a public instrumentality written into State Statute by the Maine Legislature to serve in an advisory capacity and to provide legislators with guidance and advice regarding the delivery of effective and appropriate adult mental health services from those served by them.

We would like to thank Commissioner Liberty for his continuing efforts to address the issue of solitary confinement. However, whether you refer to solitary confinement as restricted housing, administrative segregation or by any other name, it is still an inhumane way to address an individual’s behavior.

As shown through testimony given from a previous hearing on this bill, there is scientific literature to support the fact that the use of solitary confinement absolutely has no rehabilitative or restorative value whatsoever. One only needs to look at the negative mental and physical health effects that the current pandemic is having on individuals living in the community who are forced to be in isolation because of it. Ideally, we would like to see solitary confinement banned altogether.

We are a solution-based organization and as such we would also like to recommend that the Intentional Peer Support program be expanded throughout Maine’s correctional system. Again, there is literature that strongly supports engaging people who are or have been incarcerated in working with their fellow peers that benefits all concerned in an incredibly positive way. This is because mutuality between a peer support specialist and another person with lived experience **promotes connection and inspires hope**. Peer support offers a level of acceptance, understanding, and validation not found in many other professional relationships. Below are several links to some peer support programs in correctional settings, including New York and Texas.



### **Peer Support in Correctional Settings**

[https://www.cdcr.ca.gov/ccjbh/wp-content/uploads/sites/172/2019/06/WebinarSupportingDocument\\_PeerRolesinCJSettings508.pdf](https://www.cdcr.ca.gov/ccjbh/wp-content/uploads/sites/172/2019/06/WebinarSupportingDocument_PeerRolesinCJSettings508.pdf)

<https://www.psychrehabassociation.org/newsletters/psyr/developing-role-peer-specialists-within-jail-diversion-program>

<https://nicic.gov/recidivism-recovery-case-peer-support-texas-correctional-facilities>

<https://care-mhsa.org/peer-support-and-justice-diversion/>

<https://www.bbc.com/news/stories-48885846>

Therefore, we support LD 696 as amended and urge you to vote “Ought to Pass”. Thank you for your time and consideration of our recommendation.

**Vickie McCarty**

Assistant Director

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