



Maine County Commissioners Association

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LD 1301, An Act Regarding Transition Coordination, Prisoner Attendance at Funerals, Furloughs, Visitation, Education and Discretionary Accounts at County Jails

April 10, 2023

Chair Beebe-Center, Chair Salisbury, and Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety, my name is Stephen Gorden and in addition to serving as a member of the board of commissioners for Cumberland County, I am writing today in my role as chair of the legislative policy committee of the Maine County Commissioners Association. We appreciate the opportunity to provide testimony to the Committee in **qualified support** of LD 1301.

About MCCA. Briefly, the Maine County Commissioners Association was established in 1890 to assist Maine's county government in providing vital services to Maine citizens in a responsive, efficient, and credible manner. The Association is based in Augusta, represents all 16 of Maine's counties, and is governed by a board with representation from each participating county.

Discussion. Among other things, LD 1301 requires county jails to employ a "transition coordinator" who is responsible for creating a transition plan for each inmate scheduled for release. Our Association supports the important goal of ensuring that incarcerated persons re-enter society as contributing and productive members upon their release and believe that having a transition plan for each inmate could assist them with that transition.

At the same time, LD 1301 presents a new expense for counties to incur. Thus, while we are not opposed to implementing such a position in our county jails, it is not clear that this transition function is one to be undertaken by county jails as opposed to other social service organizations on the state or local level. If the Legislature determines that such services should be provided directly by county jails, it would be a local "mandate" and the Legislature would need to provide the necessary funding to employ and administer such transition coordinators. To the extent that the Legislature is willing to provide such funding to prohibit additional costs from falling on counties, we would have no objections and believe such a service could be valuable.

Conclusion. We appreciate the opportunity to provide testimony on this bill, and if you have questions or need additional information, please do not hesitate to let us know.

Respectfully submitted,

Stephen Gorden
Chair, Legislative Policy Committee

cc: Commissioner Richard Dutremble, President, MCCA
James I. Cohen, Verrill Dana, LLP, MCCA Legislative Counsel