

Sarah Johnson
Sanford
LD 1086

Testimony of Sarah Johnson
IN SUPPORT OF LD 1086

An Act to Define the Term "Solitary Confinement" for the Laws Governing a Jail or Correctional Facility

Presented by Representative Lookner of Portland

Before the Criminal Justice and Public Safety Committee, April 24, 2023

Representative Lookner, Senator Beebe-Center, Representatives Hasenfus, Mathieson, Milliken, Newman and Nutting, and Honorable Members of the Criminal Justice and Public Safety Committee,

My name is Sarah Johnson. I am a Software Support Specialist and I live in Sanford. I am a former volunteer instructor at the York County Jail (15 years) and the Women's Center at the Maine Correctional Center and Southern Maine Reentry Center (4 years). I recently worked in the education department at the Western New Mexico Correctional Facility in Grants, NM for 4 years.

I am writing to ask for your support of LD 1086. Although it seems like a simple bill, the standardization of such a critical definition as "solitary confinement" ensures a common understanding of a severely limiting form of imprisonment. It is vital that we all agree on this definition to ensure there is no misuse of this debilitating treatment. Insomnia, paranoia, PTSD, eyesight and hearing degradation and cognitive distortions are some of the well documented effects of solitary confinement.

There should be no question about what constitutes solitary confinement. This bill will not require changes or alter any policies or procedures in effect in Maine's jails and prisons.

It will simply establish a common definition of treatment that all Mainer's will be aware of and agree to.

Thank you for your time and consideration,
Sarah Johnson