



Maine County Commissioners Association

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LD 1514, An Act To Provide Safe, Short-term Housing To Individuals Recently Released From Correctional Facilities

April 25, 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 *neither for nor against* LD 1514.

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. LD 1514 directs the Department of Corrections to administer a program to provide transitional housing to recently released indigent clients of the Department of Corrections and establishes a fund to pay for the program. Additionally, this bill directs the Maine State Housing Authority to study long-term solutions for transitional housing for recently released indigent clients of the Department of Corrections.

As a general matter, our Association supports the goal of ensuring that incarcerated persons re-enter society as contributing and productive members and have safe housing upon their release from correctional facilities. In this regard, we support the goal behind the bill, even though we have no position on this particular approach that this bill takes to address the issue of transitional housing. However, if the Legislature decides to move forward with this bill as it relates to inmates of State correctional facilities, we would ask that the Legislature consider expanding the program to include funding to counties in order to administer such housing programs for qualified inmates of county jails who are released from incarceration. As the Committee knows, county jails have increasingly become the housing option of last resort for many individuals not otherwise served by society, and helping such individuals obtain housing post-release could help reduce recidivism and help improve the lives of all Mainers.

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