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LD 512, An Act To Provide Intensive Case Managers to Counties That Do Not Have County Jails or Regional Jails

March 24, 2021

Chair Claxton, Chair Meyer, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services, my name is Stephen Gorden and in addition to serving as chair of the board of commissioners for Cumberland County, I am writing today in my role as board president of the Maine County Commissioners Association. We appreciate the opportunity to provide testimony to the Committee in support of LD 512.

About MCCA. Briefly, the Maine County Commissioners Association was founded 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 and currently represents 15 of Maine's 16 counties and is governed by a board with representation from each participating county.

Our position on LD 512. As we understand it, the goal of this legislation is to ensure that every county in the State has at least one intensive case manager, employed by Maine Department of Health and Human Services, working with people who come into contact with the criminal justice system. Our understanding is that counties with county jails frequently have DHHS case managers on site working with inmates, and it is very helpful. This legislation appears to be aimed at counties that do not have county jails or regional jails, but do have detention facilities. The goal would be to provide DHHS case management services to inmates within such facilities. In this regard, LD 512 is drafted to provide a certain number of additional intensive case managers so that all 16 counties in Maine would benefit from the services provided by these trained professionals.

As you may know, a key mission of counties in Maine is law enforcement and the incarceration of certain individuals in county jails, including those awaiting trial or who have been convicted of offenses with sentences less than 9 months. This law enforcement and corrections function comprises nearly half of all county budgets. MCCA is supportive of efforts to assist people who have been incarcerated to transition back into the community, as a way to reduce recidivism and therefore reduce the burden on our law enforcement agencies and corrections facilities. Given what we have observed in counties that have DHHS-funded intensive case managers working in jails, we believe this effort to expand services to counties with detention facilities but without jails will lead to important services being offered in those counties, and to better outcomes for individuals and the communities in which they live.

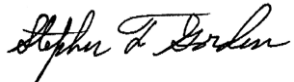
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Conclusion. We hope this information is helpful to the Committee as it considers LD 512. We would be happy to provide additional information to the Committee as needed.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Stephen Gorden".

Stephen Gorden
President

cc: Commissioner Brian Hobart, Chair, MCCA Legislative Committee
James I. Cohen, Verrill Dana, LLP, MCCA Legislative Counsel