

Craig Williams
York
LD 986

Testimony in Support of LD 986 – An Act to Eliminate the Crime of Felony Murder
Submitted by Craig Williams
York, Maine
4/22/2025

To the Honorable Members of the Maine Legislature,

My name is Craig Williams. I live in York, Maine, I'm formerly incarcerated and I have a loved one incarcerated at the Maine State Prison, I'm the founder of People Patch, an organization that empowers at-risk individuals and returning citizens to reclaim their lives through community, compassion, and tech-based support. I also organize with Participatory Defense, helping families navigate the justice system—a system I've been caught in myself, and one I've watched devastate too many lives.

I'm writing to express my strong and heartfelt support for LD 986, An Act to Eliminate the Crime of Felony Murder.

Felony murder laws don't just punish people for crimes they didn't commit—they erase the truth, ignore context, and sentence people to decades for actions they didn't take, and harm they didn't intend. These laws strip away the human story and replace it with a narrative of guilt by association.

I have watched this story unfold too closely. My cousin Cory is serving a 20-year sentence. He was trying to protect his daughter from harm, and instead of being supported, he was assaulted by correctional officers. An officer was injured—by another officer during the chaos—but Cory was the one who paid the price. Even after the truth came out, the system held on tight to its version of events, because once someone's been labeled a threat, justice stops being about facts.

That's what felony murder does. It turns people—often young, scared, or simply in the wrong place—into villains overnight. It doesn't care if you didn't pull the trigger. It doesn't care if you tried to walk away. It doesn't care if you're capable of change. It just wants someone to blame, punish and incarcerate.

But blame doesn't heal communities. Blame doesn't make us safer. What makes us safer is fairness. Accountability rooted in truth. And a justice system that honors each person's full humanity—not just their worst moment or their closest proximity to one.

In my work, I've sat beside mothers who never got to say goodbye to their sons before they were handed life sentences. I've mentored youth who, at 17, were already being told their lives were over. These are not monsters. These are people failed by systems long before they ever saw a courtroom.

LD 986 is not just a bill—it's a lifeline. It's a chance for Maine to lead with courage and compassion. To say: we will no longer punish people for what they didn't do. We will not confuse fear with justice. We will not keep clinging to a law that does more harm than good.

Please—hear the voices of those silenced by this doctrine. Hear mine. And vote to eliminate the crime of felony murder in Maine.

Thank you for your time, and for your willingness to stand on the side of justice and mercy.

With hope,
Craig Williams
York, Maine