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LD 1911

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Automatically seal criminal history record information for certain crimes.

Good afternoon Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn, and distinguished members of the joint Committee on Judiciary.

My name is Grace Rowland, and I am here today in support of LD 1911. I speak today as someone with lived experience — someone who carries a conviction history and has lived with the barriers that follow long after a sentence has been served.

I took responsibility for my actions. I complied with the court. I completed what was required of me. What I was not sentenced to, however, was a lifetime of continued punishment — yet that is exactly what many people with records experience.

Long after my case was closed, my record continued to speak for me — often louder than I could speak for myself.

It showed up in job applications that went unanswered. In housing opportunities that disappeared without explanation. In doors that closed before I ever had the chance to demonstrate who I am today. Over time, I learned that for people with records, the past is never really past — it is constantly reintroduced, regardless of growth, stability, or contribution.

Even more harmfully, our criminal records often include far more than convictions. They routinely list charges that were dismissed, cases that were never prosecuted, and even instances where someone was found not guilty. And yet those entries remain. They are visible. They follow us indefinitely.

As people with records, we are expected to provide our entire history — without context, without explanation — to employers, landlords, licensing boards, and community members who are not trained to interpret them. These records do not clearly distinguish between accusations and convictions. They do not explain outcomes. They do not reflect rehabilitation, time passed, or who someone has become.

Instead, they present a distorted picture — one that invites assumption rather than understanding. It means people are judged not on facts, but on allegations. Not on current risk, but on past paperwork. In some cases, individuals continue to face consequences for charges the legal system itself determined were unfounded.

A record captures a moment in time. It does not capture the years that follow — the work it takes to rebuild a life, to maintain stability, to contribute to family and community. Yet under our current framework, that moment is treated as definitive, while everything after it is discounted.

LD 1911 matters because it recognizes a basic truth: people are not static. We grow. We change. We learn. And the law should be capable of recognizing that change. This bill does not erase accountability, and it does not excuse harm. What it does is create a fair, structured pathway forward for people who have demonstrated change — and for those who should never have been burdened by lingering records in the first place.

The impact of LD 1911 is practical. When people can access stable employment and housing, families are stronger. Communities are safer. Employers gain dedicated workers. Recidivism declines. This is not about leniency — it is about effectiveness and public safety rooted in evidence.

I know what it feels like to carry the weight of these records and to feel powerless to correct it. And I know how transformative it is when someone finally says, “We see who you are now.”

LD 1911 sends that message. It affirms that redemption is not theoretical — it is lived, earned, and measurable. It affirms that justice does not end with punishment, but with the opportunity to reenter society as a full participant.

I am standing here today because someone once chose to see me as more than my record. This bill extends that same opportunity to thousands of Mainers who are ready to work, ready to contribute, and ready to move forward — if the law allows them to.

I respectfully urge you to support LD 1911.

Thank you for your time, your consideration, and your commitment to fairness and justice in Maine.

Respectfully submitted,
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