

December 27, 2025

Senate Chair and House Chair
Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary
Maine State Legislature
Augusta, Maine

Re: Support for LD 1911: *An Act to Automatically Seal Criminal History Record Information for Certain Crimes*

Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn, and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary

As an addiction medicine physician caring for patients across Maine, I see every day how a past criminal record functions as a structural barrier to health. Records restrict access to employment, safe housing, insurance, and care—core social determinants of health that drive outcomes for individuals and communities. Treating substance use disorders effectively requires not only medications and counseling but also removing the policy obstacles that keep recovery out of reach. Sealing eligible records is a health-promoting policy that reduces harm and advances health equity.

Even minor convictions can significantly reduce job opportunities and lifetime earnings, increasing poverty, stress, and mental health burdens—each closely tied to poorer physical health and higher mortality. When employment is blocked, patients lose stability, structure, and employer-based benefits that support recovery. Sealing records makes work attainable, strengthening income and access to preventive care. Housing stability is also affected, as background checks routinely exclude justice-impacted Mainers from rental housing. Housing instability is clinically consequential—it correlates with emergency department overuse, poor chronic disease management, and higher communicable disease transmission. By enabling record sealing after sustained law-abiding behavior, Maine can reduce homelessness risk and help patients maintain medication adherence, continuity of care, and recovery supports.

Disqualification from jobs with benefits reduces pathways to employer-based insurance, delaying preventive and chronic disease care. Justice-involved individuals also face disruptions in Medicaid enrollment and continuity of care post-release. Sealing records supports continuous coverage and timely treatment, which are essential to durable recovery in addiction medicine. Persistent stigma and structural exclusion impose chronic stress linked to cardiovascular disease, depression, and substance use disorders. Removing the ongoing visibility of an old record reduces this stress load, with downstream benefits for mental and physical health. Parental criminal records increase household instability and adverse childhood experiences—factors with long-term developmental and health consequences. Record sealing supports family cohesion, stable routines, and healthier childhood environments.

The burdens of visible records fall disproportionately on people of color, worsening inequities. Sealing promotes racial and community health equity by removing a barrier that has historically amplified

structural disadvantages. Maine has begun to offer relief for certain records; however, a petition-based approach can be complex and inaccessible to those most in need. A streamlined, automatic system for sealing eligible records—after defined crime-free periods and clear criteria—would improve economic stability and employment, raising income and expanding access to insurance and preventive care; enhance housing security, reducing homelessness and the medical consequences of instability; reduce stress and improve mental health by removing persistent stigma tied to a visible record; and strengthen health equity, ensuring that earned second chances translate into real opportunities to be healthy.

As an addiction medicine physician in Maine, I witness how criminal records serve as structural barriers to health by limiting access to employment, housing, insurance, and care—key social determinants of health. Effective treatment for substance use disorders requires not only medical interventions but also the removal of policy obstacles like unsealed records. Sealing eligible records is a health-promoting measure that reduces harm and advances equity.

From a clinical vantage point, this legislation is sound public health. It addresses upstream drivers of overdose, returns to use, and avoidable hospital use by restoring the basic conditions in which recovery can occur. For these reasons, I urge the Committee to support LD1911 to automatically seal eligible criminal records in Maine.

Thank you for your attention and for your commitment to the health of Maine's communities.

Sincerely,

Kristen Silvia MD

Freeport, ME