

# Maine PRISONER ADVOCACY Coalition



*Peter M. Lehman, PhD*

20 Lawrence Ave.  
Thomaston, Maine 04861  
(207) 542-1496  
Peter@GrowInME.com

## **Testimony in Support of LD 2059 to the Committee on Judiciary**

January 20, 2026

Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn, and distinguished members of the Committee:

My name is Peter Lehman and I live in Thomaston. I am a formerly incarcerated citizen and a person in long-term recovery.\* I am testifying in support of LD 2059 on behalf of the Maine Prisoner Advocacy Coalition whose goal is to promote restorative practices in order to increase public safety and the health of our community.

Indigent legal defense is an **emergency**.

I want to bring your attention to the **lives involved**, of the **defendants with their lives placed on hold**, and the **families waiting**. This is not an abstract legal issue. It is an personal issue.

**Hundreds of YOUR constituents are STILL waiting** for legal counsel. Punished without a trial.

**Whole families WAITING** in uncertainty for the next stage of their lives to unfold. Children waiting for pappa or mamma, or perhaps a brother or sister.

In their everyday lives, these **constituents of yours** are not “defendants.” These are mothers and fathers and children and aunts and uncles.

They may be waiting in jail, their life effectively stopped. And absent from their spouse, their children, their own brothers and sisters.

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\* In the interest of honesty and disclosure, a personal background statement is available on request.

Or they may be waiting at home, out on bail. Perhaps even working and carrying on their life. Perhaps even close to normal. **But** with charges over their heads, with uncertainty and anxiety always present.

Often, they have already lost their job or their car and their home.

**Accusation is a powerful thing.**

Punished before they even have a chance to defend themselves.

The waiting isn't a kindness or even a reprieve. It is a burden, an agony, a threat. It is a yawning chasm in their path.

These are mothers and fathers and children and aunts and uncles in crisis.

**That's the emergency** that begs for your attention.

Please help by unanimously supporting **LD 2059**.

Thank you for your attention.

I am happy to try to answer your questions.