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April 1, 2013

Senator Margaret Craven  
Representative Richard Farnsworth  
Committee of Health and Human Services  
100 State House Station  
Augusta, Maine 04333

**Re: LD 1066: An Act To Increase Access to Health Coverage and Qualify Maine for Federal Funding**

Dear Honorable Chairpersons,

I am writing in support of LD 1066. I do so, not as an authority in the matters of health care, but as a sheriff responsible for managing a correctional facility. As we all know, jails are the last resort for many of society's issues; those that are unable to be solved in other ways. The criminal justice system is not an efficient use of healthcare dollars. Our budgets have been flat funded for the past four years and our costs have not followed suit. One such major expense is related to the increasing expenses and related liabilities associated with mental illness and medical conditions that regularly pass through our doors. It appears to me that the inmates of today have much more serious medical issues than in the past, which often requires the jail and ultimately the taxpayer to absorb these very expensive costs. Additionally, the jail populations of the mentally ill routinely exceed fifty percent of our total inmate population. Corrections officers at the Penobscot County Jail routinely are guarding inmates at emergency rooms and Intensive Care Units of our local hospitals for illnesses and conditions that pre-exist their incarceration, but manifest while in our custody. These are serious events, expensive events and unfortunately common events. Many lack appropriate medical coverage.

This year, I have seen a recent spike in the healthcare dollars that are passed on to the county jails as a result of medically necessary treatment required for inmates in our custody. In the past, many more inmates were covered or were eligible for enrollment in the healthcare system. I am supportive of a system that allows individuals suffering from mental illness and addiction to move from crisis to stability; and being able to maintain that stability through continuity of coverage. It would be my hope that this in return would reduce recidivism. Federal dollars could help provide some relief.

Sincerely,

Sheriff Glenn Ross