



Maine Sheriffs' Association

"One Team, One Mission"

Sheriff Wayne Gallant, President

Sheriff Kevin Joyce, Vice-President – Sheriff Troy Morton, 2nd Vice-President
Sheriff William King, Secretary - Sheriff Todd Brackett, Treasurer – Sheriff Joel Merry, Immediate Past President –
Sheriff Donna Dennison, Executive Board Member-at-Large - Mary-Anne LaMarre, Executive Director

May 5, 2017

Senator Rosen, Representative Warren, and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety, my name is Robert Young and I am the Chief Deputy of Piscataquis County. I am here on behalf of the Maine Sheriffs Association to provide testimony in opposition of **LD-1414, An Act to Ensure the Availability of In-person Visitation in County Jails.**

One of the most difficult challenges facing Maine Sheriffs is preventing the trafficking of drugs into the jails. There are two primary ways illegal substances get into jails; trustees and visits. This week in Piscataquis County, we intercepted an inmate with a small balloon containing Suboxone that had been slipped to him by his girlfriend during a regular visit. We do not allow physical contact but they were able to transfer the balloon through mouth to mouth contact when they parted. He swallowed the balloon and then recovered it from his stool later. Both have confessed and new charges are pending. Even when you search and don't allow actual contact, they find ways to pass illegal drugs to inmates. Simple brushes past each other, dropping it on the floor and then the prisoner picking it up, leaving it in the bathroom for a trustee to retrieve. Other visitors cover for each other by drawing the attention of the corrections officer to themselves. It's important to note that the size of the drugs during transfer can be as small as a postage stamp. In York County last year, four inmates overdosed on drugs that were obtained through contact visits. Fortunately, all four survived.

In addition to the concern about having illegal drugs smuggled into our jails, we ask that you consider the fiscal impact of our already over-burdened jail system. Monitoring contact visits requires inmates to be searched after each visit. It also requires the visitors to pass through a metal detector upon entry and to be monitored throughout the visit. Not all visits end at the same time, so extra officers must be available to escort the inmates back to their pods. Some of the jails in Maine have closed pods simply because we cannot afford to staff them. Dedicating staff to monitoring additional contact visits will take them away from other areas of need, causing more stress to the county jail system.

In closing, I want to be very clear; the Maine Sheriffs' Association supports families and the basic human need to be in contact with your loved ones. We look to deliver correctional services with integrity and compassion. This bill would not only strain our under-funded jail budgets, but it would guarantee that the inmates entrusted to us would have significantly greater access to the very drugs that put them behind bars in the first place.

Maine Sheriffs strongly urge you to oppose this bill and I would be pleased to answer any questions you might have.

Sincerely,

Chief Deputy Robert Young
Maine Sheriffs' Association