9 April 2018

The 128th Legislature of the State of Maine
State House
Augusta, Maine

Dear Honorable Members of the 128th Legislature:

Under the authority vested in me by Article IV, Part Third, Section 2 of the Constitution of the State of Maine, I am hereby vetoing LD 1414, “An Act To Ensure the Availability of In-Person Visitation in County Jails.”

This bill would implement a new level of micromanagement onto Maine’s county jails by requiring county sheriffs to utilize in-person, contact-visit practices in nearly all jail visit situations, regardless of the Sheriff’s ability to provide appropriate staffing or necessary safety and security measures during such visits.

LD 1414 attempts to restrict the recent use of video visitation as the primary method of visitation in Maine’s county jails, with the justification that video visitation weakens family ties and bonds. Unfortunately, in-person, contact visits create opportunities for significant safety and security threats within the jail, through the increased chance of trafficking in contraband, weapons, and drugs.

Instead of leaving the authority and decision-making related to staffing, security practices, and day-to-day operations of county jails to those who know it best—our county sheriffs and their administrators, LD 1414 goes too far by dictating how jails will utilize staff, implementing a specific practice through the requirement of certain types of visitation, and restricting local decision-making. Allowing this bill to become law would set the stage for further micromanagement by the Legislature.

Maine’s jails already must deal with inmates entering their facilities with significant addictions and mental health issues. They do not need security operations compromised by this bill.

For these reasons, I return LD 1414 unsigned and vetoed. I strongly urge the Legislature to sustain it.

Sincerely,

Paul R. LePage
Governor