



**NEWS RELEASE**  
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**Maine Advisory Committee to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights to Hold  
Public Briefing on the Criminalization of the Mentally Ill**

**WHAT:** Public Briefing of the Maine Advisory Committee to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights

**WHEN:** Wednesday, June 14, 2017

**WHERE:** Lewiston City Hall, 27 Pine Street Lewiston, Maine 04240

Washington, DC - The Maine Advisory Committee to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights (Committee) will hold a briefing to examine the issue of the criminalization of the mentally ill in Maine.

The mental health budgets in this country have been drastically cut; in Maine, residents who in the past might have received support and medical stabilization from the mental health system now are without such services. As a result, some individuals with mental health challenges increasingly come into contact with the criminal justice system. However, Maine's state prisons and local jails are without sufficient forensic units to house and treat persons with mental health challenges. Jail administrators as well as corrections officials are some of the first to admit that they lack the facilities and trained staff to handle individuals with mental health challenges. This occurs across the state even though Maine courts have held that the failure of law enforcement officials to make a reasonable accommodation in the provision of services for the mentally ill is a violation of section 2 of the Americans with Disabilities Act.

The Committee will hear from elected officials, government officials, advocates, and others to help the Committee better understand the issue. The Committee will examine the rate of encounters that individuals with mental health challenges have with the state criminal justice system; the training of state and local law enforcement officers, including corrections officers to handle encounters with the mentally ill; the access to mental health professionals and legal assistance for persons in the criminal justice system who are mentally ill; whether accommodations/treatment are currently available and being utilized in both urban and rural correctional settings throughout the state; the effectiveness of these settings in protecting the physical and mental welfare of the affected prisoners; and the status and recommendations regarding the development, placement and use of forensic units and/or other options.

The public is invited to the meeting and encouraged to address the Committee following the presentations.

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