

Maine's top court denies appeal of Lincolnville man's manslaughter conviction

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Maine's Supreme Judicial Court has rejected an appeal filed by a Lincolnville man convicted of manslaughter in the 2023 death of his roommate.

Matthew Pendleton, 49, was initially charged with murder after his roommate and childhood friend, Kevin Curit, was found unresponsive at the home they shared. Prosecutors accused him of beating and strangling Curit after coming home to find a mess in the kitchen.

But after a jury trial, Pendleton was eventually convicted in February 2024 of the lesser charge. His defense team argued that Curit's death was related to his failing health, including hypothermia that he was dealing with. That April, Pendleton was sentenced to 20 years in prison.

In his appeal, Pendleton

challenged the court's admission of evidence including text messages he had sent to his daughter on the night of Curit's death, her testimony surrounding his alcohol consumption, their family dynamic and testimony that "a jailhouse informant" was allowed to give in court.

But in a 31-page ruling released on Thursday, the Maine Supreme Judicial Court upheld Pendleton's conviction and sentencing.

Among other things, the justices pointed to previous examples in which text messages had been admitted as evidence, argued that his daughter's testimony about his drinking habits was relevant to assessing his motives and noted that the informant's brief testimony was stricken from the record.

Pendleton will be eligible for four years of probation in 2037.