

To the Legislature:

I have appeared before this body years ago to support substance abuse services and other programs being maintained at their current levels at the Bolduc Correctional Facility, knowing that the relevant proposal would harm the mission of correction that needs to be present in institutions that bear that label. I worked in support of Crossroads way back when there was an effort to shut down one of the way-too-few programs for women in the state. I've been doing this for a long time, and I've seen too many political movements to eliminate good programs, one of which allowed my addicted son to reclaim his life.

This letter is similar. I'm not certain what is to be gained by adding restrictive measures to sober homes. We are in the midst of an epidemic that is costing Maine more than one young life per day. To make it more difficult for the using population to get help, and for those of us in the helping professions to give it, is beyond reason. In fact, it offends the very idea of being concerned about this nationwide problem.

Maine already is woefully unprepared to handle the numbers of people who not only need, but who *want*, treatment; who want simply a safe place to live, surrounded by like-minded individuals working to change their lives, to alter their paths, their futures. I've seen positive programs closed by recently-defeated politicians (who will remain anonymous) who fail to grasp the critical importance of a residence that supports people who struggle with chemical dependence.

This is not the time to make it more difficult to offer help to this population. There are already too few alternatives for those seeking help, and this is even more true for those who have been incarcerated for drug charges.

Consider, if you will, the frustration of working with someone in a correctional facility, watching him start to *get* it, beginning to have hope, to see himself as something other than a loser, only to lose it when there's no place safe for him to go after his release. I have lost too many former clients to overdoses, and the presence of sober houses at least offers possibility to those who need it.

If you truly are concerned about the opioid epidemic; if you truly are concerned about being part of the solution to this killer of young people; if you are truly concerned about a problem that doesn't care if you're the son or daughter of a politician: then how can you consider making it more difficult to find safety?

Thank you.

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