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LD 1633

Criminal justice reform is long overdue in our country. Our correctional system is overburdened. Meteing out punishment to offenders versus attempting to rehabilitate them contributes to the problem. Other countries, such as Norway, decided to tackle their similar problems with criminal justice reform\* and have made notable success. Extensive research has provided guidance on effective programs that will facilitate the successful reentry of incarcerated individuals.

Our State faces an opportunity to turn the tide by expanding the use of reentry centers throughout Maine. I hope that our legislators will support LD 1633 to expand the use of Reentry Centers. Ultimately the public will be safer, incarcerated individuals will be better prepared to return to life without bars, and taxpayer dollars could more effectively be used to make Maine an even better place to live.

Our current approach to correction is not working well. Expanding Reentry Centers is an approach that our criminal justice system should utilize.

What We Can Learn From Norway's Prison System: Rehabilitation & Recidivism

In the 1990's, Norway had a problem. Roughly 70% of all released prisoners recommitted crimes within two years of release. That rate is nearly equal to the recidivism rate in the United States today.

At that time, Norway's prison system was structured similarly to the prison system in the United States. It was built on the idea that punishment is a deterrent. Prisoners were often given lengthy sentences in harsh conditions to send a message to others.

However, Norwegian lawmakers realized that the existing system wasn't working. Crime was high, as was recidivism. Prisons were plagued with assaults, riots, and escapes. The system needed reform.

Norway's government acted boldly, completely overhauling the country's prison system. Today, Norway's prison system has become a model for the rest of the world, and some states in the U.S. are following Norway's lead. Norway's recidivism rate is much lower and prisons are now safer and more peaceful.

From First Step Alliance website.

<https://www.firststepalliance.org/post/norway-prison-system-lessons#:~:text=In%20the%201990%27s%2C%20Norway%20had,system%20in%20the%20United%20States>.