

Maine PRISONER ADVOCACY Coalition



April 12, 2023

Senator Baldacci, Representative Meyer and honorable members of the Health and Human Services committee,

My name is Jan Collins, I am assistant director of Maine Prisoner Advocacy Coalition (MPAC) and I am a member of the Franklin County Jail Board of Visitors. I am here to support LD 1975 An Act to Implement a Statewide Public Health Response to Substance Use and Amend the Laws Governing Scheduled Drugs

There are two graphs that testify to the waste of money and human potential that is the War on Drugs.

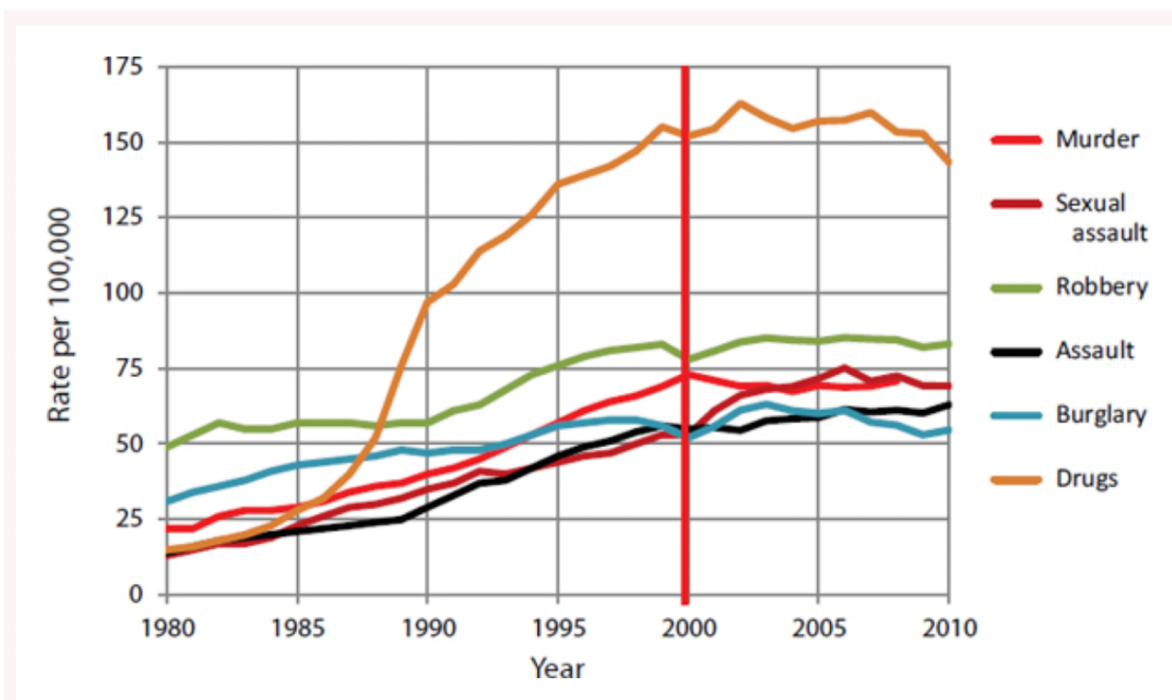
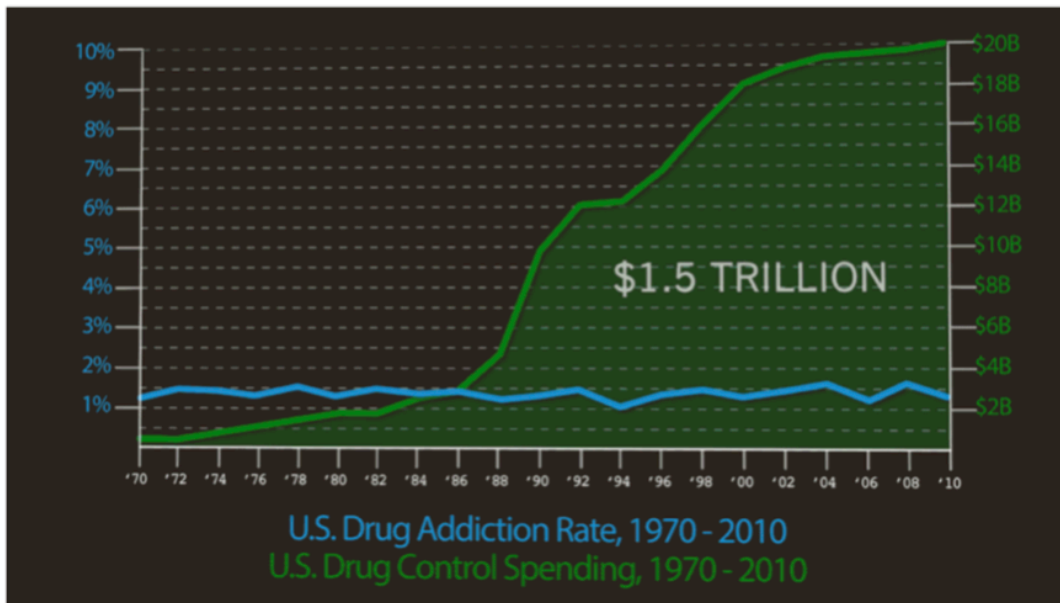


FIGURE 2-7 Combined state incarceration rate by crime type, 1980 to 2010.
SOURCE: Beck and Blumstein (2012).

The first graph shows that the growth in incarceration has been largely driven by arrests for drug use.

Latest

The Atlantic



A Chart Says War on Drugs Isn't Working By Serena Day, Oct 12, 2012

The second graph shows just how much money we spent on this drug war and how ineffective the expenditures have been. The money spent on the war on drugs has only continued to rise, with no noticeable impact on drug use.

Every reputable study shows the same outcome. The war on drugs has been a massive failure.

Yet we continue to increase our expenditures on a failed policy . Last year the Maine Department of Corrections received a \$40 million dollar increase in their biennial budget. This year they have requested an additional \$40 million dollars.

Imagine if we spent that money on treatment instead of punishment.

How many children would still have parents? How many parents would still have their children?

Jails and prisons are not treatment centers. People are at least 7 times more likely to die of an overdose after spending time in jail than they are if they do not go to jail.

They are 12 times more likely to die in the first year after release from prison than if they had not gone to prison.

I am sure that you have heard from many individuals testifying that jails have become default mental health and substance use disorder centers, never by choice, and always as a result of the lack of community resources to meet these public health crises.

Jail administrators have also talked about how they do not have the resources to treat these individuals. In fact many individuals will get much worse while incarcerated. Nationally, suicide was the single leading cause of death for people in jails, accounting for almost 30% of deaths. Someone in jail is more than three times as likely to die from suicide as someone in the general U.S. population. **In 2022, in Maine we had record numbers of individuals die from suicide and overdose while incarcerated(12).** The toll of individuals who died soon after release is many times higher. **In the same year, 85 people died while on probation and under the supervision of the Maine Department of Corrections.**

The largest public health professional organization in the U.S. (American Public Health Association) has taken a stand against carceral systems as fundamentally antithetical to our nation's health. They recommend eliminating the incarceration of those with substance use disorder and instead building just and equitable structures that advance the public's health.

Please give your full support to LD 1975 An Act to Implement a Statewide Public Health Response to Substance Use and Amend the Laws Governing Scheduled Drugs.

Sincerely,

Jan M. Collins

Advancing Public Health Interventions to Address the Harms of the Carceral System

<https://www.apha.org/Policies-and-Advocacy/Public-Health-Policy-Statements/Policy-Database/2022/01/07/Advancing-Public-Health-Interventions-to-Address-the-Harms-of-the-Carceral-System>

Bureau of Justice Statistics - New BJS report reveals staggering number of preventable deaths in local jails

<https://www.prisonpolicy.org/blog/2020/02/13/jaildeaths/>

From adult community corrections

The number of individuals on probation in the last 10 years who have passed away while on probation is 658

2023 YTD May?	21
2022	85
2021	76
2020	68
2019	59
2018	63
2017	77
2016	67
2015	64
2014	54
5/22/13-12/31/13	24
Total	658

V/r

Jenna Heald

Maine Department of Corrections