

Janet Drew
York
LD 2237

Senator Baldacci, Representative Meyer & members of the committee. I support LD 2237.

I'm a retired nurse, a member of the York County Jail Board of Visitors & several social justice advocacy groups working for vulnerable people, families and planet. As a retired nurse, I bring a health perspective to my advocacy work.

The people who bear the brunt of the consequences of the government's decisions are the most vulnerable families, and people who are poor or sick.

I support LD 2237 's focus on crisis teams, and safety.

But

Without housing, and consistent and reliable community supports where do people go beyond the crisis. Right now it is jail

First, I've watched practices in Maine courts, and see how we treat our most vulnerable.

- A missed hearing led to a warrant (failure to appear) & the man's arrest at a homeless encampment. Police knew where to find him to arrest him, but not to help him get to his court date, or transition to the community. (Note: most people who are released, do return for court dates.)

Second

Jails & prisons are the housing and psychiatric care we offer the homeless and uninsured.

-Since 2019 there are limited programs at MSP, & extended lockdowns and riots too, at Long Creek . Medical professionals know that extended isolation creates a cycle of hyper-reactive behaviors & riots. Lockdowns continue.

-There are kids housed at LongCreek with no crime, because there was no other placement.

Third

ME's system unconstitutionally denies speedy trials and adequate funding for indigent defense.

75% of people in jails are awaiting trial ("innocent until proven guilty?").

Further, all the records are public, & in the past 2 decades became electronic & forever accessible - following a person, in court and past release for life!

Fourth

There's lack of transparency in our jails & prisons.

-This year penobscot County commissioners still insist on spending tax dollars for a new jail, while ignoring the punitive attitudes, leadership & culture problems there.

-Rep. Milliken invites all legislators to join her in touring facilities.

2237 is a start

But mental health starts with meeting basic needs so there's alot more to be done to help Mainers succeed.

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