

Testimony is support of LD 210
the Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety

February 4, 2025

Senator Rotundo, Representative Gattine and distinguished members of the Appropriations and Financial Affairs Committee:

My name is Sarah Johnson and I live in Sanford. I am writing in opposition to LD 210 An Act Making Unified Appropriations and Allocations.

Cutting children and family focused service programs will harm the entire Maine community. We should be investing more in our families and communities, and if that requires adding a higher income tax bracket, then that would be the equitable thing to do.

My focus is on the current Department of Corrections budget, but I am also concerned that the negative impact of cutting these community needs programs now will roll into required increases in the DOC budget in the future.

I urge you to consider funding more educational and rehabilitative programs in the DOC as well as stable housing and services on reentry. I am also concerned with recent heating issues at MSP and the lack of an appropriate sewage system at Mountain View. These are basic human needs that we must provide. I have worked at a prison in the south west that had broken air conditioning in the summer and broken furnaces in the winter. At best it was uncomfortable and at worst, a security issue. Everything is an irritant, it is inhumane, and a barrier to any rehabilitation-focused program.

So I ask where in the DOC budget would I find funding to fix the structural issues as well as programming and reentry support services? It is my understanding that incarcerated individuals, and any family and friends who support them, fund programming. This is an appalling tax on those who can least afford to pay it.

The Mission of the Maine Department of Corrections is “Making our Communities Safer by Reducing Harm through Supportive Intervention, Empowering Change, and Restoring Lives”. Decent living conditions, food, healthcare and supporting programming are all needed to fulfill that mission. This requires funding as well as oversight of implementation. I hope you invest in Maine’s future, and fund programs in and out of the DOC that promote harm reduction, empower change and restore lives.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sarah Johnson, Sanford