

# Maine PRISONER ADVOCACY Coalition



February 9, 2025

Senator Beebe-Center, Representative Hasenfus and distinguished members of the Criminal Justice and Public Safety Committee:

My name is Jan Collins, I am Assistant Director of Maine Prisoner Advocacy Coalition (MPAC) an organization committed to ethical, positive, and humane changes in Maine's prison system.

I am here in support of LD 244 An Act to Provide Safe, Short-term Housing to Indigent Individuals Recently Released from Correctional Facilities.

In 2024, Paul S. was released from Maine State Prison without housing and was quickly going through savings from his Veteran's Administration benefits accumulated over the previous three years. He had to pay for hotel rooms while he was doing his best to avoid going to a homeless shelter. Suffering from depression as he watched his savings disappear he self-medicated. A hotel employee was concerned about not seeing him and called emergency services, saving his life.

Kenney D. was struggling with reentry. Unfortunately, Kenney became very despondent after struggling for over a year to find employment and housing after leaving Maine State Prison. On September 20th of 2024 he took his own life.

These are just two of the dozens who are released from Department of Corrections into the community without housing each year. The outcomes are predictably poor.

If an indigent resident of a DOC facility were dropped on the streets of Portland today. They would need a coat, hats mittens and a place to get warm. Next would be finding a place to get a free meal and a homeless shelter for the evening.

Formerly incarcerated people are **almost 10 times more likely to be homeless** than the general public.<sup>1</sup>

*“The transition from prison to the community is rife with challenges. But before formerly incarcerated people can address health problems, find stable jobs, or learn new skills, they need a place to live.”*

”Unfortunately, being homeless makes formerly incarcerated people more likely to be arrested and incarcerated again, thanks to policies that criminalize homelessness.<sup>2</sup>

People who are released from prison want more than anything to find employment and to have a stable life. Without housing it is impossible to get a job. An address is a prerequisite for hiring.

The investment in housing will be paid back many times over with safer communities, fewer people returning to prison, and more individuals able to support themselves and their families.

Please give your full support to LD 244 An Act to Provide Safe, Short-term Housing to Indigent Individuals Recently Released from Correctional Facilities.

Thank you,  
Jan

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1 Lucious Coulotte. *Nowhere to Go: Homelessness Among the Formerly Incarcerated*. <https://www.prisonpolicy.org/reports/housing.html>. 2018.

2 John Ralphing. *Criminalizing Homelessness Violates Basic Human Rights*. The Nation. <https://web.archive.org/web/20180705185110/https://www.thenation.com/article/criminalizing-homelessness-violates-basic-human-rights/>. 2018.

Deaths while on probation -

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
<b>Total</b>	<b>658</b>

V/r

Jenna Heald  
Maine Department of Corrections