

Good morning. Senator Rotundo, Representative Sachs, Senator Beebe-Center, Representative Salisbury and honorable members of the Joint Standing Committees on Appropriations and Financial Affairs and Criminal Justice and Public Safety: my name is Adam Zuckerman and I am the lobbyist for the Maine People's Alliance. Our 32,000 members stretch from Kittery to Fort Kent.

I am here today to testify against the proposed Criminal Justice and Public Safety appropriation in LD 258, the Biennial Budget.

As Dr. King said, "Budgets are moral documents." Free from rhetoric, they are a pure distillation of our values, of who we are and what we care about. President Biden said "My dad used to have an expression: "Don't tell me what you value. Show me your budget, and I'll tell you what you value."

So let's take a look at the budget for CJPS. It proposes that we spend over \$18 million to jail 27 children at Long Creek. Putting kids behind bars is a failed model that does not help young people thrive and become contributing members of society. Community-based treatment options closer to home help children who are struggling.

This budget proposal asks for \$461 million to the Department of Corrections, a \$45 million increase from the last biennial. It also allocates \$127 million to policing, an \$18 million increase. The MDOC itself has reported that the majority of incarcerated Mainers are there because of Maine's high rates of substance use disorder. The rates exist because our state's response to the opioid crisis is still largely one of policing, not public health-focused interventions.

However, this budget fails to make serious investments in those crucial and effective interventions. It provides under \$2.5 million to the Opioid Use Prevention and Treatment Fund and just \$3.68 million to the Office of Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services program.

We could move funds out of corrections and into areas like community-based treatment, substance use treatment and prevention, and upstream solutions to the diseases of despair that have increased alongside our corrections budget.

While there are resources from the Opioid Settlement Fund, they are not close to enough to truly address a crisis that kills two of our neighbors, friends, and family members every single day. This budget does not meet the moment. It exacerbates the conditions that it then proposes it will fix. It prioritizes confinement over care and excess over efficacy.

This budget does not reflect the values of the Maine where I grew up. We deserve better and we can do better. Thank you.