

Maine PRISONER ADVOCACY Coalition



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Testimony in opposition to LD 986 to the Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety April 18, 2023

Senator Beebe-Center, Representative Salisbury, and distinguished members of the Committee:

My name is Peter Lehman and I live in Thomaston. I am a formerly incarcerated citizen and a person in long-term recovery.* I am testifying in opposition to LD 986 on behalf of the Maine Prisoner Advocacy Coalition whose goal is to promote restorative practices in order to increase public safety and the health of our community.

In the addiction recovery community, we often say that "insanity is doing the same thing over and over and hoping for a different result." We say this because in addiction we often deny our addictions and convince ourselves that "this time will be different."

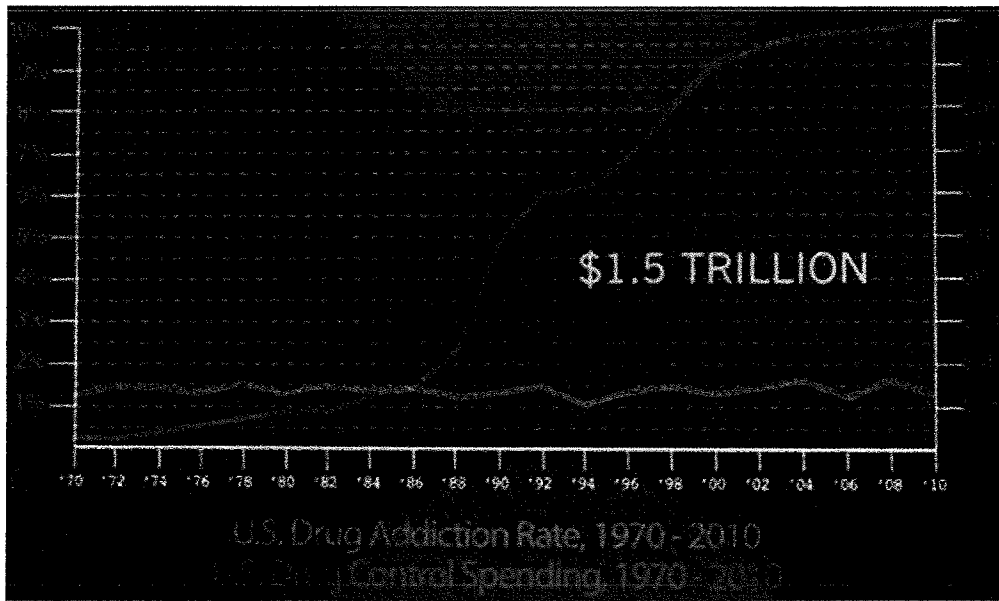
It's a habit. When in doubt or confusion or anxiety we try the same thing over and over again hoping that THIS TIME will be different. Insanity. Denial.

This bill is exactly the same thing. We **KNOW** that increasing penalties does NOT reduce drug use. It does not reduce demand. It does not reduce supply. It does NOT make people safer. It's simply insanity.

The chart on the next page only goes to 2010 but I assure you that the trend continues. Despite our massive spending on enforcement and our massive spending on incarcerating people for trafficking, the extent of illegal drug use has not changed much.

* In the interest of honesty and disclosure, a personal background statement is available on request.

Forty Years of Drug War Failure in a Single Chart



<https://reason.com/2012/10/11/forty-years-of-drug-war-failure-in-a-sin/>

What increasing penalties and enforcement DOES do, however, is make people LESS safe by diverting attention and resources from policies that work and reduce HARM.

The title of this bill says that it will “ensure safer communities.” It will not. Quite the opposite.

We urge you to defeat it LD 986.

Thank you for your generous attention.

I’d be happy to try to answer questions.