

January 22, 2024

Maine PRISONER ADVOCACY Coalition



Greetings

Senator Carney, Representative Moonen and Honorable Members of the Judiciary Committee.

My name is Jan Collins. I live in Wilton. I am assistant director of Maine Prisoner Advocacy Coalition. I'm here to testify in favor of L.D. 780 a Resolution, Proposing an Amendment to the Constitution of Maine to Protect Reproductive Autonomy.

MPAC's mission is to support Maine's incarcerated citizens, their families, and friends, in their struggle with Maine's criminal justice system. Our purpose is to reduce Maine's use of incarceration by creating a criminal justice system that is ethical, humane, and restorative in nature.

My mother has told you of the consequences of her mother's death. But the loss does not just affect one generation. I felt my mother's loss, her deep sadness and I missed having that special relationship a grandmother has with her granddaughter.

Those losses are felt most deeply by those who have little money or resources. Access to quality health care has always been available to those who had the finances and position to access it.

Those living on the margins are often left to home remedies or a friend of a friend.

That includes those who are incarcerated and are subject to harsh conditions and limited access to health care. According to a 2017 study, 86 percent of women who have spent time in jail report that they had been sexually assaulted at some point in their lives.¹ Until recently, no regular reproductive health care was offered to incarcerated women, including prenatal care. Some women had to ask a corrections officers each time they needed to change a menstrual product. Thanks to the advocacy of Speaker Talbot Ross conditions have improved.

The survivor-of-sexual-violence-to-prison-pipeline has meant that people bearing the pain of sexual trauma are likely to find themselves in the health care desert of a prison.

An individual's decision about health care should be protected by the constitution, no matter what their resources, no matter what their status,

I urge you to support LD 780 a Resolution, Proposing an Amendment to the Constitution of Maine to Protect Reproductive Autonomy.

Thank-you,
Jan Collins

<https://www.prearesourcecenter.org/resource/86-percent-women-jail-are-sexual-violence-survivors#:~:text=According%20to%20a%20recent%20study,some%20point%20in%20their%20lives.>