

Maine PRISONER ADVOCACY Coalition



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Testimony Against LD 1288 to the Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety

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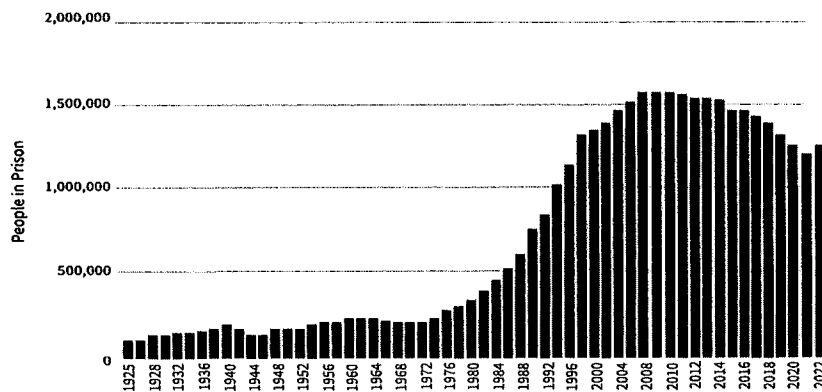
Senator Beebe-Center, Representative Hasenfus, and distinguished members of the Committee:

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 on behalf of the Maine Prisoner Advocacy Coalition and our commitment to public safety and the health of our communities. That is why we oppose this bill.

The purpose of this bill seems to be the mistaken belief that increasing penalties and making it easier to arrest and convict people will somehow solve our societal drug problem. That belief is simply wrong. We have tried it with alcohol prohibition. We have tried it in the past 50 years of sending people to prison. We have proven again that it doesn't work!

I have sat in this very room and listened to some of the same people sponsoring this bill argue that we **could not afford** to provide drug **treatment** in our jails and communities. That policy has **COST LIVES**. And it's **WRONG**. We cannot arrest our way out of our societal drug crisis.

Figure 1. U.S. State and Federal Prison Population, 1925-2022



Sources: Cahalan, M. W. (1986). *Historical corrections statistics in the United States, 1850-1984*. Bureau of Justice Statistics; Carson, E. A. (2023). *Prisoners in 2022 - Statistical tables*. Bureau of Justice Statistics.

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

Mindlessly increasing penalties without providing treatment and positive options has already cost countless lives and **WILL COST MORE LIVES** if that's where we put our resources.

This is not a trivial matter. It's a matter of life and death.

Please defeat LD 1288.

Thank you for your attention.

I'll be happy to try to answer any questions.