

# Maine PRISONER ADVOCACY Coalition



January 8, 2025

Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn and distinguished members of the Judiciary 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 1941 An Act to Implement Recommendations of the Commission to Examine Reestablishing Parole sponsored by Representative Milliken.

The idea that incarcerating more and more people for longer and longer periods of time makes us **less safe** is counterintuitive. After all locking up bad people should make us safer. So why doesn't it?

In the testimony on Clean Slate you learned about the huge impact on families of having an incarcerated family member. Families that are already struggling are crushed by this burden and when families are weakened, communities are weakened, and when communities are weakened...you get the picture. It is a negative cycle.

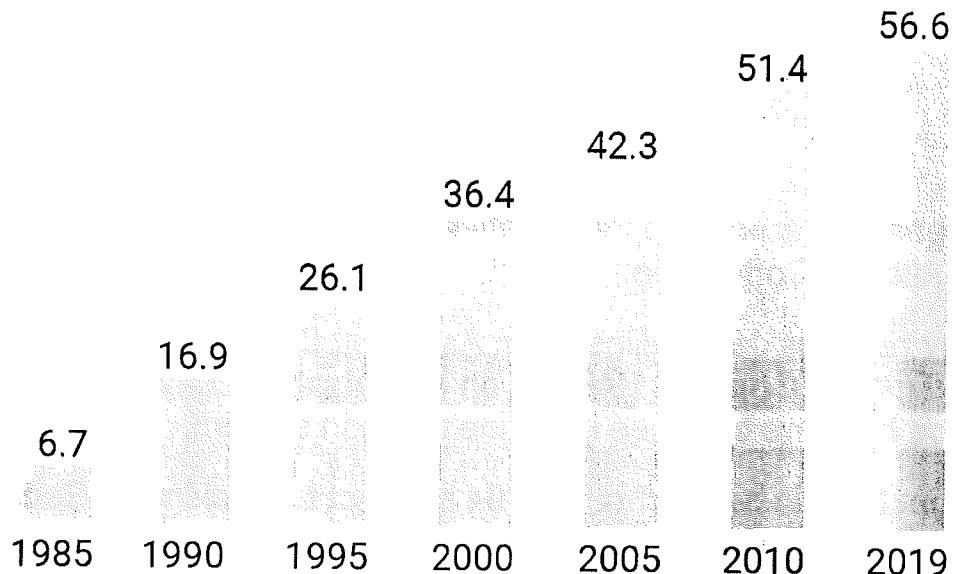
But there is more.

1. Between 1970 and 2010 we spent **1.5 trillion dollars** on the war on drugs and did not change the percentage of people who suffer from substance use disorder.<sup>1</sup>
2. The graph below shows the increase in spending on corrections by states. We have had a ten fold increase in spending on corrections, without a **ten fold** increase in safety. We are not even twice as safe. Why?



THE  
SENTENCING  
PROJECT

## State Expenditures on Corrections in Billions, 1985-2019



3. In my testimony in November for the informational hearing I noted the 3 fold incarceration increase since ending parole in 1976. We should feel three times more safe, but we feel less safe. Why?

We are spending huge amounts of money on policing and corrections. Where did that money come from? Did we just happen to have a few trillion dollars lying around so we spent it on putting people behind bars? Not likely. We have been robbing Peter to pay Paul. We have less money available for health care, for education, for housing, for child care, all the things that make us safer.

The interesting thing about this defunding of social supports is that these are the very things that make us safer - education, housing, medical, food, job skills. All of these things reduce the likelihood that someone will go to prison.

We do not need to keep people in prison who have taken every step available to redeem themselves. Those millions of dollars spent annually could be saved. These men and women could be on the outside easing the

labor shortage, supporting their families and acting as a buffer against future incarceration.

Please support parole. Make our communities safer.

Thank-you,

Jan

1 Jan Parole is the best way to reduce recidivism and keep communities safe

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