

Larry Dansinger
Bangor

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To members of the Criminal Justice and Public Safety Committee:

I am writing to support the title of LD 696, "To Prohibit Solitary Confinement in Maine's Corrections System," but not the definition of what "solitary confinement" means.

Instead of "solitary confinement," if a form of "protective isolation" can be used exclusively as a very temporary measure, for no more than 24 hours, and for no more than one 24-hour period per month, in situations where there is trauma or violence, as a way to "cool things off," then it may be a useful resource. If problems persist at the end of that 24 hour period, then other measures, such as counseling or separation of individuals, need to be taken to help the isolated individual to deal with the trauma or violence they experienced. This may also be done outside the jail or prison.

The purpose of the "protective isolation" is to assist the person who experienced the trauma and/or violence to deal as effectively as possible with that experience. It is not to be used as a form of punishment. (If a person who is locked up assaults, apparently without provocation, another incarcerated person or a staff member, that should be responded to differently.)

Such "protective isolation" must include adequate food and provision for other basic needs. It must, pending a request from the person experiencing the trauma and/or violence, include conversations with other incarcerated individuals or staff.

Solitary confinement, as it is currently used, is a form of torture and should be prohibited in any form different from the above definition of "protective isolation."

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