Larry Dansinger
Bangor

April 19, 2021

To members of the Criminal Justice and Public Safety Committee,

I am writing in support of LD 663, An Act To Make Comprehensive Substance Use Disorder Treatment Available to Maine's Incarcerated Population. However, this support is qualified, as I will explain below.

I do not believe locking people up benefits public safety. Punishment does not teach a positive lesson. It damages those who are locked up, making them more likely to be charged with (and sometimes commit) other acts considered criminal. It does not provide helpful closure for many who are the victims of crime. It is expensive and takes money away from public health and other programs that can more effectively address public safety needs such as mental health support, substance use disorder programs, poverty alleviation, and insuring adequate health care and economic security, among others.

I believe substance use disorder treatment will be much more effective if it is provided outside of a lockup setting. That should be a first priority for any such treatment programs. However, I also do not want to deny such treatment for those who are detained and locked in a facility. If they are denied treatment, I believe it is a form of torture, because it can cause excruciating pain, so it must be prevented.

I strongly encourage that such SUD treatment be available as an alternative to arrest and incarceration as much as possible. It will reduce the chances of that individual being charged with, and perhaps committing in the future, other acts considered criminal. It will increase public safety and save taxpayer money as well. If adequate funding can be provided for outside-of-jail/prison treatment programs as a first priority, then I support such treatment inside jails and prisons.

I urge your support for LD 663 but also to actively support funding for treatment outside of jails and prisons as well.

Sincerely,

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