

No Penobscot County Jail Expansion is a community group in Penobscot County. We began **The Penobscot County Jail Storytelling Project** as the start of a community conversation on how we can heal our communities with truth, justice, and care—not more jailing, arrests, and criminalization.

We offer this testimony from our interviews with community members, in **support of LD 663 - An Act To Make Comprehensive Substance Use Disorder Treatment Available to Maine's Incarcerated Population**.

Dylan Begin was interviewed in late 2020. Among other important points, Dylan spoke about his experience with substance use disorder, and as a person who had to deal with withdrawal symptoms after his incarceration. His interview highlights how criminalization and reductive views on drug use encourage inhumane treatment of people dealing with withdrawal while failing to address any underlying factors or caring for the people in question.

One of his central criticisms was PCJ's lack of healthcare and support for his medical needs during his time there. "Yeah, PCJ was when I was detoxing off of opiates," he said. "They didn't take my detox seriously and didn't put me on any protocol. They just kind of probably assumed I was looking for meds." This perspective of PCJ personnel is unfortunately extremely common, a prioritization of punitive measures against people dealing with substance use disorder over compassion and medication-assisted treatment.

"It took me two weeks to even see someone for mental health [...] when I saw med lady it was a week in and they told me my detox wasn't bad enough or I had been there long enough..."

Dylan added that at the time, PCJ offered no medication assisted treatment, and though some recovery services existed within the jail, (namely the 12 step program and access to BARN [Bangor Area Recovery Network]), they focused on AA over NA. He had little to no support throughout his withdrawal.

Dylan summed up his experience at PCJ by emphasizing that rehabilitation will always be better than prison or jail for someone dealing with substance abuse, and that the systems in place at PCJ only served to exacerbate vicious cycles: "Well, when I got out of PCJ I went right back to using and the same routine. I don't think jail is the answer to substance use. You can put people in jail but they don't learn anything. There's a lot to learn when it comes to substance use in jails."