

## Devin's Story

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.



Devin's portrait was painted by Maine artist Lizzy Schule.

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.**

Today I'd like to share with you some insights from an interview with Devin.

Thank you for reading, and thank you for caring about our incarcerated family. With your help, we are making a difference.

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I interviewed Devin by email late last year. He wrote, "Around the time I was arrested I was addicted to meth, I'm an intravenous drug user and I was taking suboxone.

"It was a really rough time period in my life. I was dealing with PTSD and panic attack disorder, as a result of me being pistol whipped and attacked with a gun, the overdose of my best friend, the incarceration of my parents, and a car accident.

During his stay in Penobscot County Jail, Devin witnessed several others go through untreated withdrawal, including withdrawals from prescribed methadone treatments. He also witnessed drug withdrawals which were not medically managed, a common and dangerous occurrence within our county's jail.

"My cellmate, a good friend of my stepdad's, went through withdrawal... My buddy Josh\* was very sick and couldn't sleep for weeks into his stay through the night.

"Another buddy of mine Tim\* was coming off methadone and it's one of the worst if not the worst opiate in my opinion to come off of. He had to have us bring his dinner and lunch trays because his hands were shaking so bad he'd drop them otherwise.

It's common to see people going through detox without any sort of treatment or care given to them, just have to sit in the cell block and suffer it out."

When asked what he thought could be done differently, Devin responded:

"Lots needs to be done differently. The changes actually needed won't come without a full overhaul of the criminal justice system. Ensuring that contact between those in jail and advocates within the community is important. Pushing for better mental health treatment and MAT drugs opposed to a multimillion dollar expansion and building replacement would be great."

Continued criminalization of drugs and mental health issues will not solve Maine's overdose epidemic, and only swells an already marginalized population of incarcerated community members. We cannot continue to fail these people, who deserve care and assistance, and are best placed to address and advise on these issues.

Instead, we must move to a treatment-focused approach, which LD 663 would begin to establish.