

Zeraph Moore
No Penobscot County Jail Expansion

Good morning. My name is Zeraph Dylan Moore, and I coordinate a team of 14+ volunteers to listen to and document the stories people who have experienced incarceration inside Penobscot County Jail. I am submitting some of their testimonies collected by myself and my team, but would also like to give a personal testimony in support of LD 663.

Throughout nearly every interview I and others have conducted with members of our community who have been incarcerated, a recurring theme arises. Almost everyone we speak to has experienced a non-medically-managed withdrawal inside the jail. These withdrawals have had many effects, including medical risks such as extreme dehydration, to lasting emotional effects such as PTSD. These withdrawals occur at times due to loss of access to illegal substances, but more often they occur due to loss of access to prescribed and necessary medication such as methadone. These individuals have been removed from a medical treatment plan.

In Penobscot County, we have the unfortunate honor of often leading the state in our per capita overdose rate. Hundreds-- perhaps even thousands-- of people in Penobscot County who, over the last few years, have gone through withdrawal--painful, agonizing, traumatizing weeks of withdrawal, inside a cage, away from their families, without medications to help them. When they are released, if they begin using again, they are more likely to overdose due to loss of tolerance.

Though it should not be this way, currently, jails and prisons are a major provider of healthcare to some of the most vulnerable people in Maine-- those who are in poverty, homeless, and/or have a substance use disorder. This imbues the state with a responsibility -- to ensure that that healthcare is comprehensive, appropriate, and effective.

Ultimately, we can't escape the costs of the opioid epidemic. We will pay them one way or another. We can pay them in proactive, intelligent and data-driven action and funding that leads to healing and harm reduction, or we can pay them in overdose deaths, more incarceration, deepening poverty, and families bearing generational trauma. I believe Rep. Warren's bill fits into the former category and is a critical, compassionate step toward healing Maine and Penobscot County. Thank you.