

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. I offer this testimony in support of LD663.



With that said, I'd like to introduce you to Breann's story. I was honored to interview Breann in September of 2020 over Zoom about her incarceration in Penobscot County Jail in the spring of 2018.

Breann's story highlights some of the most crucial needs in Penobscot County and its jail: The need for substance use disorder treatment, timely medical care, and individualized mental health care.

I believe her story also shows how important it is to avoid jail sentences whenever possible, because jails cause great physical and mental harm to the human beings inside.

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 think you'll find a lot of this when you're speaking to people," Breann said frankly, as we started our conversation, "but I was an addict.

"Women feel so ashamed, moms— and I know men do, too, but I'm not a man, so I just don't know— that they're addicts, and women seek treatment the least. They don't want people to know; they don't want their employers to know; they don't want their parents to know. And then they end up in jail.

"Because it gets too bad and something happens: they end up dealing, they end up— A lot of women in there ended up prostituting, and that was what they were there for. Because they just didn't have any resources out here. That they end up doing whatever they have to do to get their drugs, and it often just lands us in jail.

"You know, I was one of the lucky ones, to have a good doc, to have an education, to be raised right—right? But when I had my baby when I was 19, I had a C-section and they put me on Percocet, and that was it."

Ultimately, Breann was pulled over on a snowy winter day and found herself unable to avoid jail this time. By this time, she had found her way to medication assisted treatment for substance use. But because her license was suspended, she was arrested, and the court sentenced her to 60 days.

"I didn't wean [off treatment], I didn't have time," said Breann. "So I just went in knowing I was going to be sick. And I was severely ill for about half of the sentence; for 3-4 weeks I was very ill. So that's why when I saw this [project], it really spoke to me because I went through some things in there that no human being should ever have to go through." During her stay in Penobscot County Jail, Breann was denied medical care for an infection and mental health care for her

tremendous suffering during her withdrawal from her legally prescribed MAT (Medication Assisted Treatment), which the jail refused to continue administering.

**Our jails are full of people with substance use disorders and mental health conditions, many of whom sought and were denied care in the community.**

**In jail, they suffer continued trauma, dangerous withdrawals, and receive little to no assistance with their core needs.**

It is critical to offer access to Medication-Assisted treatment, groups, counselling and bridging to outside services for women like Breann who are motivated to enter and stay in recovery, but who currently lose access to their treatment while incarcerated.