



MAINE ASSOCIATION OF CRIMINAL DEFENSE LAWYERS

P.O. Box 17642
Portland, ME 04112-8642
(207) 523-9869
mainemacdl@gmail.com

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Senator Susan Deschambault
Representative Charlotte Warren
Committee on Criminal Justice & Public Safety
100 State House Station, Rm. 436
Augusta, ME 04333

RE: LD 663: An Act To Make Comprehensive Substance Use Disorder Treatment Available to Maine's Incarcerated Population

Dear Senator Deschambault, Representative Warren, and Members of the Committee on Criminal Justice & Public Safety,

MACDL supports the passage of LD 663.

When our clients are in crisis, too often, they end up ensnared in the criminal legal system. From their encounters with law enforcement, to their arrests, to their prolonged detention at the local jail, to imprisonment in Maine's prisons, these are traumatic experiences for many of our clients, exacerbated by their decompensating mental states and forced, unmedicated, withdrawal from substances—including opioids but also alcohol (still Maine's most abused drug) and other substances. Without treatment—including medically assisted treatment in the form of Suboxone, methadone, and similar medical interventions—our clients continue to stay stuck, trapped in the cycle of criminality that is driven by their addiction.

Establishing the provision of a comprehensive substance use disorder treatment program in each prison in Maine to support clients' transition to recovery for those struggling with substance use disorder would make Maine a leader in recognizing the struggles of so many of its people and how incarceration and punishment—as opposed to treatment and support—exact an untold penalty from our most vulnerable people. The provision of medically-approved and evidence-based interventions for our incarcerated clients is not just necessary—it is the most humane thing we can do.

It would be well worth it for the state to invest in such a program for Department of Corrections facilities. From a budgetary standpoint, such programming would save money—and lots of it—in the long-term. Incarceration is enormously expensive. We are spending so much and getting so little. From a human standpoint, focused treatment and intervention for our clients would save lives and reinject dignity and humanity into this traumatizing, destabilizing process. The human cost of incarceration cannot be overstated. Our clients—our neighbors, friends, and family members—deserve so much better, and they deserve access to treatment that can improve and save their lives.

Public safety is improved when people who are struggling are linked to the services and treatment that will provide them relief. As always, the preferred

method for providing treatment and support is within the community—diverted away from the traumatizing and damaging effects of prosecution and incarceration. However, once people have been incarcerated, we must do all we can to ensure that they have access to the treatment and supports they need to get healthy and restart their lives. This is vitally important, particularly when people are released into the community: the first few days following release are so dangerous for those who have been in recovery but who lack the appropriate supports when transitioning back into the community. We cannot afford or tolerate another death of a person who left languishing without the support and treatment to which they are entitled.

Thank you for your attention to this matter and for allowing me to speak with you all today. I would be happy to answer the questions of the Committee.

With appreciation,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Tina Heather Nadeau". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large loop at the end.

Tina Heather Nadeau, Esq.
MACDL Executive Director