

Larry Dansinger  
Bangor

May 9, 2021

To members of the Criminal Justice and Public Safety Committee,

I am writing in support of LD 1668, An Act To Provide Funds for Community-based Substance Use Disorder Treatment and Recovery Services and To Reduce by Half the Funding for the Maine Drug Enforcement Agency.

I do not believe locking people up benefits public safety. Punishment does not teach a positive lesson. It damages those who are locked up, making them more likely to be charged with (and sometimes commit) other acts considered criminal. It does not provide helpful closure for many who are the victims of crime. It is expensive and takes money away from public health and other programs that can more effectively address public safety needs such as mental health support, substance use disorder programs, poverty alleviation, and insuring adequate health care and economic security, among others.

It is clear to me and hopefully to others throughout the state of Maine that detaining and locking up kids does not help them to address the trauma that likely caused them to do harmful acts. Their brains are still forming; they can be helped by various forms of treatments but not by incarceration, which only exacerbates whatever traumas are causing them to act in harmful ways.

The money saved by closing Long Creek can be used to address the needs of youth, those who might otherwise be locked up in Long Creek and others who might be on the verge of harmful acts, in ways that can prevent those youth from being caught in a vicious cycle of violence and crime as youth and as adults.

I want to give special attention to Section 3, creating a diverse group of experts—people with personal and lived experience—as part of those who will help determine how the funds that are saved could be better used. Too often, these real experts are not given credence or participation in decisions for which they often know more than those who make the decisions. Thank you for this opportunity to redirect state funds to where the need is greatest.

Please vote ought to pass on LD 1668. This bill would increase public safety by keeping youth out of jail and instead getting them into public health programs where they can more effectively manage the traumas they have experienced.

Sincerely,

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