

Maine PRISONER ADVOCACY Coalition



February 18, 2022

Senator Deschambault, Rep Warren and honorable members of the criminal justice and public safety committees. My name is Jan Collins and I am assistant director for Maine Prisoner Advocacy Coalition. I am here today to ask your support for [LD 1721 An Act Regarding Dignity for Women in Correctional Facilities](#)

MPAC's mission is to support Maine's incarcerated citizens, their families, and friends in their struggle with Maine's criminal justice system. Our purpose is to reduce Maine's use of incarceration by creating a criminal justice system that is ethical, humane, and restorative in nature.

For most of the history of the correctional system in Maine, women residents were a distinct rarity. Due to the current opioid crisis, Maine has been incarcerating an unexpectedly large number of women for drug related offenses.

Prisons, jails, social services, and communities in general have been ill prepared for this influx.

Women in carceral facilities experience [rates of sexual victimization](#) at four times the rate of men. Because they are more susceptible to victimization, care should be taken to minimize the opportunities. More female corrections officer should be hired for women's facilities, female officer's should accompany women to medical appointments. Women with lived experience should have a seat at the Board of Visitors.

Children are the unintended victim's of our incarceration of their parents. More thought needs to be given to mitigating the harm done to children and families.

CHILDREN WITH INCARCERATED FATHERS, particularly African-American children, ARE **3X MORE LIKELY TO BECOME HOMELESS** and move more frequently than their peers.(HECHINGER REPORT- KATY RECKDAHL FOR *THE NATION*)

65 % of families with a member in prison or jail could not meet basic needs.
(Annie E. Casey Foundation)

ONE IN FOUR CHILDREN of incarcerated parents WERE UNDER THE AGE OF FIVE.(Annie E Casey Foundation)

MORE THAN 75% LIVE IN LOW INCOME HOUSEHOLDS.(Annie E. Casey Foundation)

CHILDREN WITH INCARCERATED PARENTS ARE **2X AS LIKELY TO DEVELOP LEARNING DISABILITIES OR ANXIETY.** *(RECKDAHL)

CHILDREN WITH INCARCERATED PARENTS ARE **3X MORE LIKELY TO SUFFER DEPRESSION OR BEHAVIORAL PROBLEMS** (CHILDREN DON'T NECESSARILY SAY HOW THEY FEEL; THEY ACT IT OUT). (RECKDAHL)

KIDS OF INCARCERATED MOTHERS, IN PARTICULAR, ARE AT **GREATER RISK OF DROPPING OUT OF SCHOOL.**** (RECKDAHL)

In Maine, 1 in 14 children has had one or more incarcerated parents. This bill is a first step in recognizing that our penchant for over incarceration has consequences for children, families, and our communities.

Ultimately, we must find a way to rehabilitate parents in a community setting that allows for the development of parental skills while parents are receiving medical services for addiction and or critical mental health issues. If we do not, we risk perpetuating damaging trauma in the next generation.

I speak from experience. My father's incarceration thrust my family into homelessness and poverty. It was the defining event of my childhood.

Please support LD 1721 **An Act Regarding Dignity for Women in Correctional Facilities.**

Thank-you,
Jan M. Collins
Wilton, ME