

Maine PRISONER ADVOCACY Coalition



Monday, Jan 8, 2024

Greetings Senator Beebe-Center, Representative Salisbury and Honorable Members of the Criminal Justice Committee and Public Safety Committee

My name is Jan Collins, I am assistant director of Maine Prisoner Advocacy Coalition. I am here to support **L.D. 931 An Act to Expand the State's Workforce by Supporting the Transition from Incarceration to Employment**

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 system that is ethical, humane, and restorative in nature.

As we know from Maine DOC statistics in my earlier testimony, reentry is an extremely vulnerable period of time for the returning citizen.

- *Within a year of leaving prison, the risk of death rises 12-fold. Overdose is a common cause, but heart disease and cancer are other contributors.*
- *Three in 10 people under community supervision have substance use disorders, 4x the rate of SUD in the community.*
- *People under community supervision also have a higher rate of mental health disorder.*
- *High rates of cognitive disabilities interfere with individuals' ability to keep track of the **18 to 20 requirements a day** people on probation must typically comply with.*

In order to be successful, the process of reentry, both before and after release, requires support services to meet the needs of formerly incarcerated individuals, especially the large percentage of people with cognitive disabilities, mental illness, and medical conditions, including substance use disorder.

An investigation into the cause of death for those individuals who died while on probation or on Supervised Community Confinement would strengthen the bill providing much needed information regarding the services necessary for a successful return to our communities.

We all carry the weight of the failure of our current system. Families suffer the loss of loved ones, communities see additional crime, and we must pay for the cost of a return to prison that could have been avoided.

Prison is a traumatic environment, filled with people who have life histories of trauma. We should not be surprised when so many fail to successfully reenter society. The real surprise is that anyone succeeds. Those who succeed do so because they have a strong support network on the outside.

Everyone needs that support. This bill will help us understand where we need to add resources.

Thank-you for your support.

With appreciation,

Jan M. Collins

*Assistant Director Maine Prisoner Advocacy Coalition
Franklin County Board of Visitors*

*PO Box 360, E. Wilton, ME 04234
207.578.8419*

1. Manz CR, Odayar VS, Schrag D. *Disparities in cancer prevalence, incidence, and mortality for incarcerated and formerly incarcerated patients: A scoping review. Cancer Med.* 2021 Oct;10(20):7277-7288. doi: 10.1002/cam4.4251. Epub 2021 Sep 3. PMID: 34477309; PMCID: PMC8525139.
2. Prins SJ, Draper L, Center J, John D. *Improving outcomes for people with mental illnesses under community corrections supervision: A guide to research-informed policy and practice.* 2009.
3. Torrey EF, Kennard AD, Eslinger D, et al. *More mentally ill persons are in jails and prisons than hospitals: A survey of the states.* Treatment Advocacy Center Arlington, VA; 2010
4. <https://www.apha.org/Policies-and-Advocacy/Public-Health-Policy-Statements/Policy-Database/2022/01/07/Advancing-Public-Health-Interventions-to-Address-the-Harms-of-the-Carceral-System>
5. https://www.minnesotalawreview.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/Corbett_4fmt_PDF.pdf

Jan Collins
East Wilton
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<https://www.apha.org/Policies-and-Advocacy/Public-Health-Policy-Statements/Policy>

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