

Maine PRISONER ADVOCACY Coalition



April 7, 2021

Senator Claxton, Rep Meyer and honorable members of the Health and Human Services committee. My name is Jan Collins and I am assistant director for Maine Prisoner Advocacy Coalition. I am here today to speak in support of [LD 1009](#) Resolve, To Create a Health Care Ombudsman Position To Serve in Maine's County Jails.

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.

I believe that it is best to have those with direct experience speak on the issues. Maine Prisoner Advocacy Coalition regularly receives requests for assistance from family and friends distressed at the treatment of their loved ones in Maine's county jails. I am including their voices with identifying information deleted.

1) I was referred to you because my 21 yr old son has been arrested and is in the County Jail in Maine. He is awaiting extradition on a probation violation. He has a severe mental disability and has attempted suicide since in custody at the facility. He is and has been on suicide watch since he got there. I have requested appropriate medical expert evaluation and possible transfer to a hospital where he can get adequate treatment. The jail has refused to listen to me stating that he is stable while keeping him on suicide watch. The jail will not allow anyone to visually see him...not even his lawyer. His life is in jeopardy in that facility with officers who are ignoring his mental suffering and keeping him in a holding cell without adequate mental support. I am begging for your assistance. Please don't let my son die there.

2) I am emailing on behalf of my friend, she needs help with her incarcerated son, who is not receiving his bipolar and schizophrenia medication, he is currently being held at the county jail and she has called there many times, also called his lawyer and many other persons in our area for help and either they won't return her phone call or state

that they can't help her. Her son has informed her he plans on committing suicide on or by his birthday which is in a week and he is not in his right state of mind due to being denied his medications, please if you can help or know where we can go for help please contact myself thru my email or his mother. Thank you for your time and anything you can help us with is appreciated

3) Hi my brother is being held at county jail for supposedly a probation violation but he has been there since before Thanksgiving his lawyer is no help and his probation officer won't return his lawyers calls. my brother was in a motorcycle accident and suffered a traumatic brain injury and the powers that be say he shouldn't be out walking free and that he needs counseling and other help he was released then arrested for breaking curfew... he has very bad medical needs and they keep refusing him at the jail they give him ibuprofen and Tylenol and then take it a way and when his temperature goes up from the pain they throw him back in quarantine he's been in quarantine 2 or 3 times and one time they put him in quarantine when he never left the facility. I'm lost I feel so bad for him . And I think his rights are being violated. I could be wrong , but i am really worried for his safety he has a broken shoulder and broken vertebrae in his neck plus chest pains and other ailments can u steer me in the right direction to maybe get him out of there ty

4) My daughters father is incarcerated at County jail, and I found out recently that he has attempted suicide three times in the last several months, so I am going to find out why they are not providing some kind of mental health services for those that are attempting suicide, and also why incarcerated residents in similar situations are not offered some sort of medical care for injuries he sustained during an attempted suicide.

Unlike other facilities such as schools, hospitals, and nursing homes, the public does not have access to jails and prisons. It is a closed system. Only people who work in the system evaluate the system, as a result there are no checks and balances and there is no one whose responsibility it is to insure that prisoner rights and health care and protected.

It is my hope that this bill will rectify that lack of access and outside oversight insuring the protection and care of those in state custody. I support a working group to strengthen its provisions.

Sincerely,
Jan M. Collins janmariecollins57@gmail.com

Jan Collins
East Wilton/MPAC

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