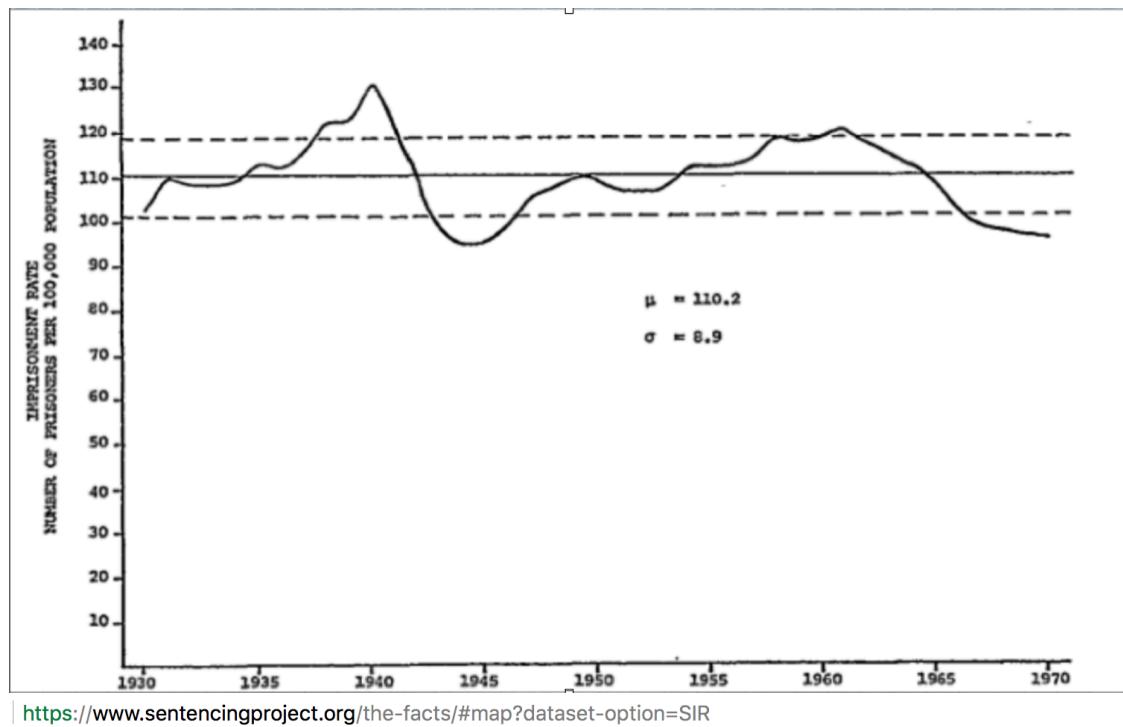
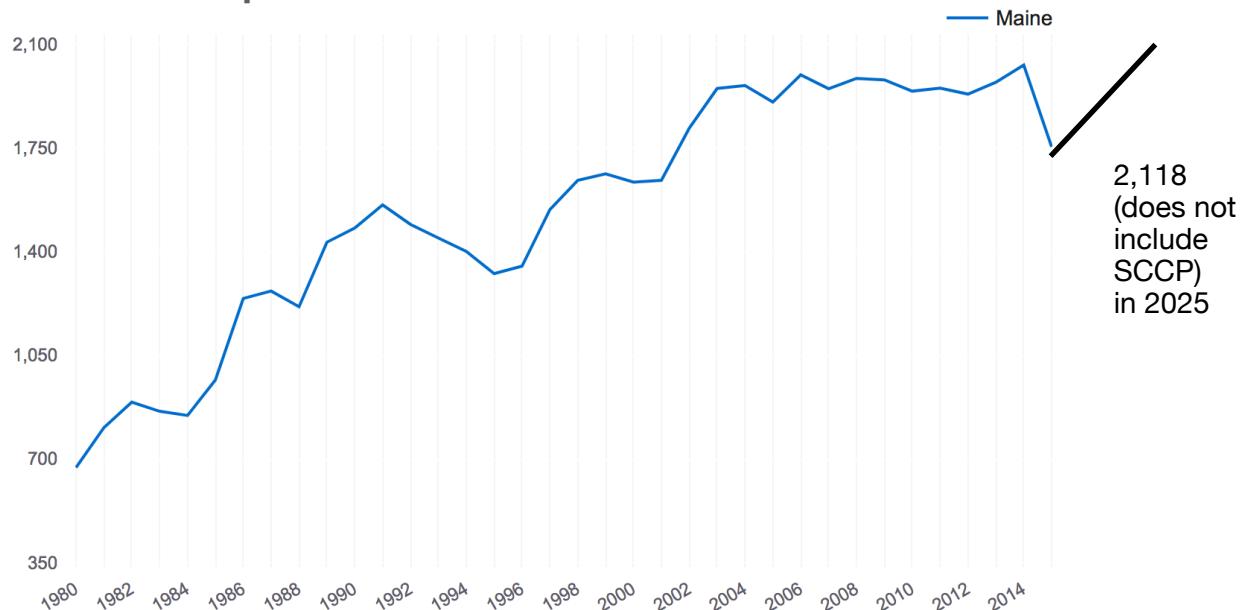


Greetings Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn and Honorable Members of the Judiciary Committee.

1. Both the federal government and New York state introduced comprehensive parole systems in 1910. All 50 states went on to adopt some form of parole, including Maine in 1913. What made parole attractive? It incentivized rehabilitation by rewarding good behavior, self improvement, hard work, and education. It remained in place until 1976. almost immediately after it ended there were attempts to revive it, with one of its greatest proponents the then warden of Maine State Prison.¹



Prison Population Over Time



2. Prison populations rose almost immediately. Courts compensated for any “good time” that might be earned on a sentence by lengthening sentences, with the sentencing averages increasing as much as 20%.²

3. Longer sentences have led to an aging prison population. The 2024 MDOC Year End Adult Data Report indicates that the adult men’s population has slowly but steadily gotten older in each of the last six years.³ The MDOC now has an a unit it refers to as the “Assisted Living Unit” at Mountain View Correctional Center and a hospice program at Maine State Prison. When Commissioner Liberty was Warden Liberty at Maine State Prison, he once told me he had spent \$40,000 in the previous month transporting inmates to medical appointments in the community. That was more than 8 years ago. The DOC has patients with dementia, has had and may still have patients that require dialysis, people in wheelchairs and people who can no longer complete the tasks of daily living independently. Policy requires that they be shackled and accompanied by two corrections officers to any appointment outside the facility.

4.

		Regular Wages		Overtime			
	Maine Total	851,280,182.60		46,391,753			
	Total State Employees		16,732.00				
	MDOC Total	68,485,923.06		11,530,968			
	Total MDOC Employees		1,378.00				
	MDOC % of Maine	8.05%		24.86%			
	MDOC % of State Employees		8.24%				
	Location	Total Regular Wages	% of MDOC Total	Total Overtime	% of MDOC OT	Employees	% of MDOC Employees
	Central Office	16,147,267.96	23.58%	731,093.1	6.34%	257.00	18.65%
	MCC	15,719,408.81	22.95%	2,936,695	25.47%	338.00	24.53%
	Charleston (MountainView)	9,440,364.68	13.78%	1,759,875	15.26%	163.00	11.83%
	Longcreek	6,419,430.95	9.37%	1,174,817	10.19%	186.00	13.50%
	MSP (and Bolduc?)	19,736,308.41	28.82%	4,790,128	41.54%	416.00	30.19%
	Downeast	1,023,142.25	1.49%	138,357.8	1.20%	18.00	1.31%
	TOTAL	68,485,923.06	100.00%	11,530,96	100.00%	1,378.00	100.00%

As seen in this graph, keeping people who have redeemed themselves and long past their ability to be a threat to the community has a cost. In 2024, the MDOC led all other state agencies in overtime costs, well over \$11million dollars. Almost a quarter of all overtime payed out by the state went to the MDOC. One officer alone made more than \$100,000 in overtime on top of his regular pay. Several officers made pay greater than the Commissioner of Corrections. There is no

question these hard working employees deserve their pay, but at what price to their own health and the safety of the facility are we asking them to work such long hours?⁴

5. The crisis in corrections includes a severe shortage of corrections officers. Overtime pay is not the only cost. Correctional facilities around the country and including Maine are going into lockdown mode at ever increasing rates. Something that was a rarity only a few years ago is a weekly if not daily occurrence. An entire week may go by with almost no movement. As a result, programming and education are sacrificed. The very mission of the Department of Corrections is suspended.

6. The Department of Corrections has often argued that the Supervised Community Confinement Program (SCCP) program is akin to a parole program. Let me assure you that it is not. Using data from the 2023-24 MDOC Data Report. A total of 1542 residents were released in 2023-2024. This would seem to be the pool from which SCCP participants were selected yet only 136 were on SCCP at the end of 2024. In other words, less than nine percent (9%) were approved. And although the program can offer up to 30 months of supervision, anecdotally the average amount of time that people seem to be approved for is 6 months.

7. The American Public Health Association has declared mass incarceration a public health crisis⁵

People without health insurance are more than ten(10) times more likely to go to prison than someone who has health insurance.⁶

Thirty seven percent of people in prison have a mental illness.⁷

There are 10 times more people with mental illness in prison than there are in mental health hospitals.⁸

More than 70% of people in U.S. jails and prisons have at least one diagnosed mental illness or substance use disorder or both.⁹

I could go on, I have a 20 minute presentation on this topic, but perhaps another time.

8. The same ingredients that keep people from committing a crime contribute to keeping people released from prison from committing a new crime. They are education, employment, job training, programming and connection with the community. The key ingredient to incentivizing people to participate in these programs is hope.

Please note that length of time in prison is nowhere on this list. Long sentences are neither a deterrent to crime, nor a measure of the probability of redemption.

I think that everyone in this room can agree that providing a safe place for people to rehabilitate is a community asset. Where we might disagree is on whether someone who has redeemed themselves, acquired social skills for success, shown an understanding and remorse for the harm they caused and a willingness to repair harm should be allowed a second look.

Is our legal system a system of punishment or is it a corrections system? Do we believe in retribution or in redemption?

Thank-you for your consideration.

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Addendum: Please note that when parole was ended there were over 400 people still in the system who qualified for parole. The last person eligible for parole received it last year. The parole board still exists. In addition, there are people who received parole from other states who are living in Maine.

1 [The State of Maine v. Parole](https://downeast.com/issues-politics/the-state-of-maine-v-parole/). Will Grunewald
<https://downeast.com/issues-politics/the-state-of-maine-v-parole/>

2 Maine Rejects Indeterminacy - A Case Study of Flat Sentencing and Parole Abolition
Lehman and Kramer <https://www.ojp.gov/ncjrs/virtual-library/abstracts/main-rejects-indeterminacy-case-study-flat-sentencing-and-parole>

3 2024 MDOC Year End Adult Data Report.pdf. https://www.maine.gov/corrections/sites/maine.gov.corrections/files/inline-files/2024%20Year%20End%20-%20Adult%20data%20report_0.pdf

4 This graph was calculated from annual data published by the State of Maine. <https://wgme.com/news/i-team/payroll-data-these-were-the-highest-paid-state-of-maine-employees-in-2024-money-department-of-health-and-human-services-attorney-generals-office>

5 American Public Health Association statement on the Carceral system 2021 <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>

6 Chronic Punishment: The unmet health needs of people in state prisons.https://www.prisonpolicy.org/graphs/spi_2016_insurance_comparison.html

7 Changing Attitudes About Mental Health <https://deconstructingstigma.org/guides/incarcerated- mh#:~:text=Often%2C%20an%20incarcerated%20person's%20mental,history%20of%20mental%20health%20conditions>

8 National Judicial Task Force To Examine State Courts' Response to Mental Illness, State Courts Leading Change: Report and Recommendations, Oct. 2022, at 9.<https://www.sji.gov/mental-health-task-force-mhtf/>

9 *Id.*