

Maine PRISONER ADVOCACY Coalition



March 24, 2021

Senator Deschambault, Rep Warren and honorable members of the criminal justice and public safety committees. My names is Jan Collins and I am assistant director for Maine Prisoner Advocacy Coalition. I am here today to speak in opposition of LD 521 **An Act To Modify the Rule-making Process for Establishing County and Municipal Jail Standards.**

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.

In [March of 2019](#) a federal judge affirmed the right of inmates with Substance Use Disorder(SUD) to receive medication assisted treatment that had been denied to them by Maine jails and prisons.

Over and over again federal courts have ruled that the denial of medical care to inmates is an infringement of constitutionally guaranteed rights and is considered cruel and unusual punishment. Courts have also ruled that women and men should receive equal treatment under the law.

On November 7, 2020 I attended a Maine Department of Corrections hearing to review proposed updates to DETENTION AND CORRECTIONAL STANDARDS FOR MAINE COUNTIES AND MUNICIPALITIES. The policy proposals included updates from bills passed during the legislative session and from legal actions that occurred during the preceding months, as well as a

requirement for written communicable and infectious disease prevention and control program and policies to address the Covid-19 crisis.

There were 30 people present representing various aspects of county government all of whom had the opportunity for input into the aforementioned policies. The objections were uniformly against the the policy changes because they would likely cost counties additional money to fulfill their constitutional duties.

Although I am fully supportive of county correctional budget needs, I believe this bill is an exercise in futility as most of the DOC's policy changes involve settled law and not instituting them will result in more law suits with no difference in outcomes. I believe a better course for the county entities is to lobby for additional budget funds to cover their facilities operations. Better yet, I would fully support diversion programs that would move people with mental health or substance use disorder to facilities in the community that would better meet their needs. Reforming cash bail would do wonders for the county jail budgets by allowing people charged with non-violent crimes to await their court date at home.

I ask you to defeat this bill. Rather than support evidence based decision making this bill would do the opposite.

Thank-you,

Jan M. Collins

Maine Prisoner Advocacy Coalition

Wilton

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