



MAINE
Unitarian Universalist
State Advocacy Network

*"Giving voice to Unitarian
Universalist values in the
public arena through a
statewide advocacy and public
policy network anchored in our
faith and animated by its
principles."*

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Testimony Before The Joint Hearing of the Appropriations and Financial Affairs Committee and the Criminal Justice and Public Safety Committee on Monday March 1, 2021

Senator Breen, Representative Pierce, Senator Deschambault, Representative Warren and honorable members of the Joint Committees:

Thank you for this opportunity to speak to the failed model of putting youth behind bars at the Long Creek Youth Development Center, Maine's youth prison, and to oppose portions of this proposed budget that support the failed model, using money that could be better spent on so many other important projects and programs.

My name is Mary Finn, and I am a resident of Saco Maine. I submit this testimony on behalf of the Maine Unitarian Universalist State Advocacy Network (MUUSAN) as a person of faith committed to our fundamental principle of justice, equity and compassion in all human relations.

I am proud to add the voice of our 600-member organization in opposition to portions of this proposed budget that perpetuate the harm resulting from mass incarceration in Maine, particularly at the Long Creek Youth Development Center. Although Black residents make up less than 2 percent of Maine's population, 23 percent of juveniles incarcerated at Long Creek are Black. Maine will spend over \$600,000 per youth per year to keep youth in custody at the Long Creek. This money is a failed treatment option for struggling young people.

Placing youth behind bars is a failed model. Community programs closer to home, in our communities, are the best option for struggling youth. Providing a continuum of care in the community including mental health services, housing, appropriate group homes, behavioral modification programs and other community -provided support is the better option. We need to divest resources away from policing and confinement and reallocate resources to health care, including drug and alcohol treatment, housing and education.

This proposed two-year budget continues to fund programs that don't work, removes youth in need from our communities, and blocks the ability of neighbors to care for each other. On behalf of the Maine Unitarian Universalist State Advocacy Network, I urge you to revise the budget presented to reflect our state's commitment to the at-risk youth in Maine by reallocating the funds that would support Long Creek and instead, funding community programs that would actually help those in need in Maine.

Respectfully submitted
Mary Finn