



MAINE
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State Advocacy Network

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Senator Carney, Representative Harnett and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on the Judiciary:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of LD 858. My name is Naneen Chace-Ortiz and I speak on behalf of the Maine Unitarian Universalist State Advocacy Network from a faith tradition that affirms the inherent worth and dignity of every person and seeks justice, equity and compassion in human relations. These principles are applicable to every person, including those on probation with a substance use disorder.

We are encouraged by the strong and bipartisan leadership behind this bill, with sponsors and co-sponsors including the Chairs of this Committee, the Marine Resources Committee, the Criminal Justice and Public Safety Committee, and representatives of both parties. It reminds us that this is not a political issue but one that reflects the kind of community in which we all wish to live.

As a state and society we need to find a more sensible response to non-criminal probation violations. Released inmates who were diagnosed with a substance use disorder while incarcerated had the highest rate of rearrest upon release.¹ Barriers to access to treatment remain, especially for low-income people and those criminalized for drug use. Over the past two years, Maine has provided Medication Assisted Treatment (MAT) to over 500 inmates within the Department of Corrections, while they were incarcerated or linked to community providers upon release. However, this is just the beginning of what is needed to reduce the health and economic impact of substance use disorders. This bill can help give people access to a certified recovery coach, a certified intentional peer support specialist or a qualified recovery support service while they are on probation. These are measures that have been proved effective and have the best prospect for interrupting the revolving door of substance abuse and incarceration. As a society we all benefit from that.

I also speak as a nurse who understands the medical needs of all people who have a substance use disorder need to be met. Substance abuse disorder impacts individuals, families, and communities in Maine. LD 858 is one step in ensuring that accessing evidence-based treatments in lieu of reincarceration can be part of taking a compassionate and effective public health approach to drugs.

Thank you for your time and I urge you to pass this bill to ensure that everyone has access to the substance use disorder treatment they need.

1. Kristen M. Zgoba, Rusty Reeves, Anthony Tamburello, Lisa Debilio. Criminal Recidivism in Inmates with Mental Illness and Substance Use Disorders. *Journal of the American Academy of Psychiatry and the Law Online*; Feb 2020, JAAPL.003913-20; DOI: 10.29158/JAAPL.003913-20.
<http://jaapl.org/content/early/2020/02/12/JAAPL.003913-20>