

Maine Women's Lobby

THE VOICE OF MAINE WOMEN

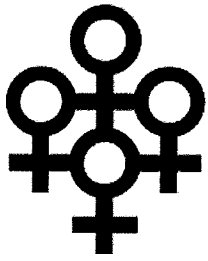
Testimony of Danna Hayes in Opposition to LD 1407

Senator Brakey, Representative Gattine, and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services. I am Danna Hayes, Director of Public Policy for the Maine Women's Lobby. We work to advance policies that improve the economic, social and political status of Maine's 678,000 women and girls. I am here today in to oppose LD 1407, *An Act To Require Screening and Testing for Illegal Substances of Beneficiaries under the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families Program*.

There is no doubt that the proposed rule we are discussing today will significantly affect many vulnerable Maine families. Most of those will be families headed by women who have likely already experienced great adversity. In Maine, even a possession of a small amount of prescription opiates is a felony-level offense. Not only do women make up the vast majority of TANF users, unfortunately we are also the subject of disproportionate enforcement of drug crimes. Since the beginning of the nation's implementation of the so-called "war on drugs", the number of women in prison rose by 800%.ⁱ In 2011, over 25% of women in state prisons were incarcerated from drug offenses, compared to just over 16% of men.ⁱⁱ

We also cannot ignore the reasons why many women find themselves involved with illegal substances in the first place. Over 70% of women in substance abuse treatment programs have been victims of violence at some point in their lives.ⁱⁱⁱ Studies have directly linked the number of women's violent experiences to the severity of her drug or alcohol addiction.^{iv} For many women, the use, sale or transportation of drugs are part of a coercive and abusive relationship including, although not limited to, situations we refer to as human trafficking. As you can imagine, these experiences make getting back on one's feet extremely difficult.

TANF and food supplement benefits are meant as a tool to achieve stability. This proposed rule will make it more onerous for eligible women and families to become economically stable. It is for these reasons, we ask you not to move forward with this bill. Thank you.



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ⁱ Women's Prison Association Fact Sheet, 2009.

http://www.wpaonline.org/wpaassets/Quick_Facts_Women_and_CJ_Sept09.pdf

ⁱⁱ The Sentencing Project

http://www.sentencingproject.org/doc/publications/cc_Incarcerated_Women_Factsheet_Sep24sp.pdf

ⁱⁱⁱ Women in Prison Fact Sheet. Women in Prison Project of the Correctional Association of New York. March 2002. http://www.prisonpolicy.org/scans/Fact_Sheets_2002.pdf

^{iv} Caught in the Net: the Impact of Drug Policies on Women and Families. April 2005.

https://www.aclu.org/files/images/asset_upload_file431_23513.pdf