

Maine Governor Refuses to Do the One Thing That Could Prevent State's Suicide and Overdose Epidemic

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Maine is facing a suicide and overdose epidemic. But Gov. Janet Mills refuses to do the one thing statistically proven to stop this epidemic—open Maine's churches.

Liberty Counsel is fighting in courtrooms across America and before the Supreme Court to free the churches from unconstitutional church shutdown orders and restrictions. Some of the pastors and churchgoers we represent still face jail threats and fines for simply attending church.

The data from 2020 paints an ugly picture of what happens to a society held hostage by tyrants.

Maine, which continues to have the worst church restrictions in the country, is facing an epidemic of deaths. But those deaths aren't coming from the virus. Those deaths are the result of Mills' COVID lockdowns.

Thursday, Maine Attorney General Aaron Frey took to the airwaves to bemoan the state's skyrocketing drug-overdose rate—2020 was the worst year in history for Maine overdoses.

Maine lost 7.4 people per 100,000 to COVID last year, according to CDC data. But as Mills continued to keep churches closed, overdose rates began to skyrocket. By the end of 2020, the increase in Maine overdose deaths outpaced COVID deaths by 3 to 1, with 29.9 people per 100,000 dying due to deadly

addictions.

And those numbers continue to rise. Frey told reporters that the most frequent cause of death among Mainers in January 2021 was the deadly opioid fentanyl.

While statewide suicide numbers for 2020 are not yet available, those rates are skyrocketing as well ... especially among Maine's citizens aged 18-24.

"The suicide attempt rate particularly among adolescents has just skyrocketed," said Dr. Mary Ottolini, pediatric chair of the children's hospital at Maine Medical Center of Portland.

Mills is restricting the one entity that can help—the church.

I've been repeating this for a year now, and the data has revealed the truth. Lockdowns are killing Americans.

Frey's proposed solution is more of the same harsh treatment that contributed to many of these overdoses in the first place. Frey told reporters that the communities must "get the COVID-19 pandemic under control so that barriers to treatment and support are removed."

But the barriers preventing treatment are not coming from the community. Instead, those barriers to treatment are being imposed by the state itself.

Churches and Bible-based addiction centers like the one our client Calvary Chapel of Bangor runs, the Calvary Residential Discipleship program, have taken every possible action to keep their people safe and healthy. The young men and women in the program want to meet because the combined benefits of the Bible and corporate prayer are the keys to the sobriety that has freed so many graduates from the throes of addiction.

Mills first banned all church attendance. Commercial businesses, abortion mills and liquor stores remained open and nearly unfettered, but churches were banned. Addiction

treatment centers could meet with any number of participants, but the moment a Bible was opened or a sermon preached, that gathering was in violation of Mills' shutdown order.

Mills later eased some restrictions, allowing churches and Bible-based addiction groups to meet in small numbers ... but these restrictions remain so severe that Calvary Chapel's discipleship program still cannot meet without breaking the law.

Maine has the worst church restrictions in the country, now that Liberty Counsel forced an end to California's church closures. But Maine churches are severely limited in the number of people allowed to worship.

Yet studies show that the one segment of the U.S. population not struggling with depression is regular churchgoers.

Regular churchgoers are the only segment of the U.S. population to have reported "improved" mental health during 2020! As Christians, we know how the Holy Spirit can work in a gathering of believers.

No government entity may keep a person away from church against their will. Numerous governors have tried in the past year, but Liberty Counsel has kicked down the gates of hell to free those churches.

Our case defending Calvary Chapel of Bangor is pending at the Supreme Court. Except for our Colorado case, all our other church cases are still in litigation. We will not rest until lawless governors are permanently quarantined, so they will never again shut down the church. {eoa}

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