



The Maine Coalition
to End Domestic Violence

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**Testimony of Andrea Mancuso, on behalf of the Maine Coalition to End Domestic Violence
In Opposition to LD 1941:
“An Act to Implement Recommendations of the Commission to Examine Reestablishing
Parole”
Thursday, January 8, 2026**

Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn, and distinguished members of the Judiciary Committee, on behalf of the Maine Coalition to End Domestic Violence (MCEDV)¹ I write to oppose LD 1941, “An Act to Implement Recommendations of the Commission to Examine Reestablishing Parole.”

MCEDV has engaged with the Maine Legislature on the issue of parole on a number of occasions over the last six years, most recently on November 12, 2025, in a presentation to this Committee. In lieu of regurgitating all the issues we have previously raised, we ask you to reference the written remarks MCEDV submitted to the Committee in November. Today, we limit remarks to two issues that are, at the core, most important to any effort to revive parole in Maine: responsible process and commitment to resource allocation.

While MCEDV thanks Representative Milliken for her openness to engaging in a productive dialogue about issues we have identified in LD 1941, even if this Committee were to start from the premise that parole should be re-established, **the flaws in this legislative vehicle are still extensive**. There remain essential policy and implementation questions left unaddressed, not the least of which is, for retroactive application, how will an indeterminate sentencing structure be layered over a determinate sentence already issued by the courts, where a judge has essentially already set a jail/community supervision balance. We note again that when Maine traded indeterminate sentencing for determinate sentencing in the 1970’s, it took five years, more than 40 meetings, and a significant re-write of our criminal code by those with a high level of expertise to ensure it was accomplished thoughtfully and

¹ MCEDV’s membership includes the eight regional domestic violence resource centers (DVRCs) across Maine and two culturally specific service providers. In FY2025, **more than 14,000 people** sought and received assistance from Maine’s DVRC’s, which provide 24-hour crisis intervention, emergency sheltering, housing assistance, legal advocacy, child protective advocacy, and other practical assistance to help survivors overcome barriers to achieving safety for themselves and their children as well as consultation for those concerned about them.

without unintended consequences. It is inconceivable that parole can be re-established without the same level of sustained commitment and attention.² If the Committee determines Maine should move forward with re-establishing parole in Maine, **we urge you to convene those with appropriate expertise and give them the necessary time and resources to look globally at Maine's criminal code in order to make appropriate, thoughtful and comprehensive modifications.**

Further, though the bill is titled “An Act to Implement the Recommendations of the Commission to Examine Reestablishing Parole,” it does nothing to address one of the most significant observations that Commission made: **more comprehensive community-based and re-entry services are essential in order for indeterminate sentencing to be successful.** Our correctional facilities are not currently structured or funded to be rehabilitative in nature and to fully support capacity for behavior change. Nor are there sufficient re-entry services available to support those who might be paroled. The Joint Standing Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety has looked at the need for greater re-entry support for the last two legislatures – with significant problems around current re-entry services being noted by several of the individuals and organizations this Committee will hear from in support of LD 1941.

More importantly, we know it is better for all communities if there are sufficient support resources in those communities such that crimes involving serious harm can be reasonably prevented. The costs of repairing what is broken by trauma are much higher than the costs of raising whole human beings. Yet, **the Maine Legislature has been unwilling to appropriate sufficient funds to support critically needed community-based services across the board despite broad consensus that those services are crumbling.** This includes, without limitation, substance use recovery services, medical and mental health services, and crime victim services. How can this state invest in giving “second chances”³ to those who have caused egregious harm, while knowingly leaving services essential to preventing future egregious harm critically underfunded and failing as a result?

MCEDV is not categorically opposed to the idea of parole. We believe in the capacity of many of those who have committed crimes to change, and we share the desire to address the disproportionate impact the criminal legal system has on marginalized communities, specifically including communities of color, people living in poverty in Maine, and those living with substance use or mental health disorders for whom the criminal legal system has been the default community response for decades. However, particularly for those who have

² Evidence of how aligning an indeterminate structure on top of the existing determinate sentencing statutes can be seen even in today’s Sponsor’s Amendment. There is language that would, if enacted, require a court to note whether a life sentence is issued “with the possibility of parole” or “without the possibility of parole,” but provisions in the eligibility section make life sentences eligible after 20 years of incarceration without regard to whether a court specified the sentence should be with or without parole.

³ We note again that, particularly in cases involving domestic violence, residents incarcerated a Department of Corrections facility are rarely “first-time offenders.”



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intentionally used violence to cause harm, investment in recovery, rehabilitative and prevention services – both within correctional facilities and within communities – must go hand in hand with a process of decarceration to properly address the safety of community and of the victims who have been harmed. We have yet to see this commitment made in our state, and we are unable to support re-establishment of parole without it.

This is an important conversation, and MCEDV remains an interested community partner in the outcome of your work. MCEDV will be available for the work session(s), and we hope you will see us as an ongoing partner and resource in your process.

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We are the Maine Coalition to End Domestic Violence.



Connecting people, creating frameworks for change.

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