

Anna Diaz  
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3/3/2020

To: Committee Members for Criminal Justice and Public Safety  
From: Anna Diaz, Concerned Citizen and Board Member Maine Inside Out  
Re: LR 3255 An Act to Implement the Recommendations of the Juvenile Justice System Advisory Assessment and Reinvestment Task Force

Honorable Members of the Criminal Justice Committee:

My name is Anna Diaz, and I am a Maine resident, voter and business owner. I am writing to regarding the introduction of LR 3255, which signals the state's shifting priorities and recognition of the need for age-appropriate, not strictly punitive, accountability measures for responding to children who have caused harm.

I also write today as a Board member of Maine Inside Out (MIO). MIO is a statewide non-profit organization whose member base is currently incarcerated and formerly incarcerated young people impacted by the criminal justice system, their families and communities. MIO's work in the last 10 years has included arts based and re-entry programming at Long Creek Youth Development Center working with over 300 young people incarcerated there, in various contract arrangements with the Department of Corrections. In the past five years, MIO has created and implemented arts based community reintegration programming in Androscoggin, York, Cumberland and Kennebec Counties.

It is my personal concern for the treatment of Maine's youth, in particular the youth who are most vulnerable due to systemic racism, poverty and other factors outside their control, which led me to join the Board of MIO and to address you today.

*I am testifying neither for nor against this bill and want to advocate for amendments to LR 3255 as a way to address concerns with the bill.*

- 1. In Sec. 6. Appropriations and allocations, I would like to recommend that there be an intermediary who is not tied to the Department of Corrections or Department of Health and Human Services. I advocate for a group that could administer the funds**

**with other community organizations who are responsible for selecting community partners, distributing funds, and tracking performance metrics.** I feel strongly that DOC and DHHS are the wrong avenues for administration of funds and tracking of performance metrics. This bill's emphasis on appropriations for *community reinvestment and community based* programming and supports allows us to imagine significant change for system involved families. It only makes sense for community experts to be the ones with decision-making authority advocating for what is best for our communities and not for these decisions to be made within the systems that have caused harm to those they are meant to serve.

- 2. In Sec. 3. I urge an amendment to create an integrated team of stakeholders, including representatives of state agencies, community-based providers/advocates and community members with lived experience of youth incarceration to design a continuum of care for pilot communities.** Shirley Chisholm said, "if they don't give you a seat at the table, bring a folding chair"; I ask that we not only give a seat but elevate the voices of those who have had direct lived experience of youth incarceration and those who work with and advocate for them. We must treat these lived experiences with the gravity and consideration they deserve when making plans for the future of our communities.

I have a tender heart where young people are concerned. I believe that we as a community have a duty to lift each other up when we have stumbled. I believe our communities can be trusted with this charge and have the ability to carry it out with integrity and accountability. I sincerely hope that these recommendations will be taken seriously and appreciate your attention to my testimony.

Thank You,  
Anna Diaz  
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