

Testimony in Support of LD 1552
Presented by Cushman Anthony
On behalf of the Maine Council of Churches
January 21, 2022

Senator Deschambault, Representative Warren, and members of the Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety: My name is Cushman Anthony. I am a Quaker and I live in Yarmouth. I am a retired lawyer and mediator. I was a member of the House of Representatives from 1986 to 1992, and was House Chair of the Select Committee on Corrections during the 115th Legislature.

I am speaking today on behalf of the Maine Council of Churches, the leading organization of Protestant Christian churches in our state. The Council has seven member denominations and two associate member churches representing 439 churches with more than 55,000 parishioners across the state. Our Prayer for Justice states that we are working toward "...a world where peace is built with justice, and justice is guided by love."

We support passage of LD 1552 to Provide Reentry Services to Persons Reentering the Community after Incarceration.

People returning to society after incarceration need many types of support. They need a place to live, a way to support themselves, and assistance in staying away from the things and people that got them into trouble in the past. It is a difficult transition, and if they fail, they will be right back in prison. Maine has a way too high recidivism rate, which costs us dearly. We can and must do better in helping these individuals to find their proper place in society.

Most of us have moved at least once in our lifetime, and know the difficulties of learning where we can find a nearby grocery store as well as public transportation. These individuals have far more barriers to overcome.. They have no job and no place to live, and they have lost contact with friends and family that could be supportive.

We must help them or they will fail and find themselves back in our care in prison. They cannot do it alone; they need assistance through special programs to help them. This bill calls for the creation and support to do just that.

The Bible calls us to look after those who have been put into prison We need to support those people when they are released, so they can again become contributing members of society. Thank you.