

June & Roy Smoot  
Kennebunk  
LD 178

Esteemed Criminal Justice and Public Safety Committee Members:

As someone who experienced the ultimate loss of a brother who was killed by a person with a handgun, it may seem odd for me and my wife to strongly support LD 178. Yet, we deeply believe incarcerated men and women can and do change for the better, develop remorse for violent and nonviolent crimes they commit, and become able to safely return to our communities as valuable, contributing citizens.

Our state's MDOC offers numerous excellent rehabilitative, educational, job skills, and life skills programs through which incarcerated people are earning college degrees (AA, BA, MA, MS, PhD), gaining employable skills in industries, computer programming, youth development, agriculture, and other arenas, and learning life skills in emotional literacy, managing substance use disorder, and more. The lack of resentencing, parole, and commutation options means incarcerated people who have gained skills for successful and safe reentry are not allowed to return and contribute their skills to their communities prior to the conclusion of their sentences — if they even have a release date. Keeping people who are no threat to society but who, to the contrary, are able and willing to be contributing community members serves no financial, public safety, or rehabilitative purpose. Rather, the emphasis in our sentencing laws on punishment over rehabilitation and reentry hobbles MDOC's ability to fulfill its mission of "Making our communities safer by reducing harm through supportive intervention, empowering change and restoring lives." Bringing back parole is a vital first step for Maine.

Additional positive results of paroling inmates include over \$13MM saved in our MDOC budget via reducing our incarcerated population, adding paroled people to our work force, reducing stress on MDOC facilities and employees, and reversing Northwestern University Law Review research which states that Maine is one of the worst four states in the country with regard to pathways toward release based on rehabilitation as laid out in human rights law. We must do better for our state and rehabilitated inmates in Maine.

Bring back parole in Maine. LD 178 establishes a wise and thorough process for parole to be a safe and productive tool of our MDOC.

We urge you to approve LD 178 with your "ought to pass" recommendation to our full legislature. Thank you,

June & Roy Smoot  
Kennebunk, ME