

Linda Small
6 Orchard Road
Standish, Maine 04084

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Criminal Justice and Public Safety Committee
100 State House Station
Augusta, Maine 04333

Dear Committee,

I write in favor of LD 178 - An Act to Support Reentry and Reintegration to the Community. Public safety is my priority. As a formerly incarcerated individual and member of society, I witnessed the release of individuals ill-prepared for a successful transition. Parole offers an incentive to do the necessary inner work of transformation through education, reflection, and accountability.

How does parole support the Maine Department of Corrections' mission of public safety and rehabilitation? Corrections' duty is to protect society by releasing people better than when they arrived in the system. True individual rehabilitation does not come from mandatory classes on a case plan. Active rehabilitation lives in the heart and the soul of a person who feels hope, dignity, and an opportunity to replace harmful habits with community-based restorative practices. Under the LD 178 bill, these personal improvements and readiness are assessed by experts.

I am not in favor nor does the bill afford wholesale release of incarcerated women and men. Nor is it an early-release program. LD 178 creates opportunities for women and men who demonstrate release readiness through dedication and the challenging work of self-improvement to affect positive transformational change. If recognized, their internal shift to community involvement, collective care, and the common good fosters family reunification, stronger communities, and a productive and healthy society.

As a taxpayer, I desire to shift the money saved by releasing qualified women and men under LD 178 to community-based restorative justice programs, after-school activities, and public education in the service of all Maine citizens. Releasing 170 people on parole in the first year would save \$7 million in the cost of running prisons in the first year alone.

For the sake of our state, communities, and families, I ask the Committee members to vote in favor of LD178 An Act to Support Reentry and Reintegration to the Community.

Sincerely,

Linda Small

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