



March 7, 2023

Testimony in Support of LD 178, An Act to Support Reentry and Reintegration in the Community

Submitted by: Frank O'Hara
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Senator Anne Beebe-Center, Representative Suzanne Salisbury, Members of the Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety:

I am Frank O'Hara, and am writing to express my support for LD 178, *An Act to Support Reentry and Reintegration in the Community*. By way of background, I am a longtime resident of Hallowell, a retired community development and housing planner, and member of the Social Justice Commission of St. Michael's Parish.

This issue has been well-studied, and I have no arguments to add that you haven't read in the study commission's report. All I can add is that it is long past time to act. Can't we all acknowledge at this point that Maine's policy of putting people in jail for extended periods of time, then releasing them without skills or resources into unprepared communities isn't working? It's a waste of taxpayer dollars, as the commission has pointed out. But much more importantly, it is a waste of human potential.

We can do better. We can prepare offenders for meaningful work and income after their release. But it takes planning and community and business involvement before the day of release; or put another way, it takes parole.

Maine is fortunate in having a talented Commissioner of Corrections in Randy Liberty, whom I am sure will do a good job in implementing this program. It's time to stop talking and start acting. Pass this bill and get the program going in the coming year. Maine will be the better for it.

Thank you.

Frank O'Hara
Hallowell
LD 178