

To: Senator Beebe-Center and Honorable members of the Criminal Justice and Public Safety Committee.

Re: Testimony on behalf of LD 178

March 13th, 2023

Honorable members of the legislature,

My name is Nicole Lemay and I am currently an incarcerated member of Maine's population. I am writing this letter as a personal testimony in favor of LD 178. I am one of the fortunate individuals who will soon be released on the Supervised Community Confinement Program. Words cannot express how grateful I am for the opportunity to be released after serving half of my prison sentence. During my incarceration, I have made the best of educational opportunities and will be graduating college in May. Throughout my experience, I have met many amazing human beings with whom I share a common experience, mistakes that led to incarceration. Our stories and crimes may vary but the one thing we have in common is the desire for a second chance.

I believe humanity is built on second chances. The Maine Model of Corrections has been a role model for other correctional centers across the nation. Maine has set the pace for modernized prison systems that are providing educational opportunities, employment training, rehabilitation programs, and most importantly: humanization. These efforts indeed have the power to fulfill the goal of rebuilding and transforming lives. There is no denying that these are wonderful contributions to the hard work and dedication of personal growth within the incarcerated population but we still fall short of *real* change. As a part of the restorative justice practices within the Maine Model of Corrections, we can and should do more.

When I think of passing LD 178, I envision the faces of many incarcerated college students and inspiring individuals, who are clinging to a thread of hope. Hope breathes life into the desire to become your best, to be accountable, to give back to the community, and change your way of life. I picture the men and women who desire a safe, positive, and fulfilling

community outside of the prison walls. These are the individuals who dream of contributing and helping Maine's communities upon release.

Those who would qualify for the opportunities under LD 178 are those who demonstrate low risk of reoffending and are indeed rehabilitated. Under LD 178, the hope of living a fulfilling life motivates incarcerated individuals to complete rehabilitation programming, education, and developing employment skills. Simply by the hope of living a fulfilling life once again. If LD 178 was brought to Maine, our beautiful state would save millions of dollars from the cost of housing prisoners. This money should be used to heal our communities

As a fellow Mainer, I value our honorable state and all of the people in it. I have faith that we will work together to move forward past the 47-year gap of limited reintegration opportunities for men and women who are ready to return to their communities. I challenge those in opposition to LD 178 to spend time in the educational setting within the prison walls. I hope opposers gain empathy, courage, and a spark of inspiration to move Maine in a new direction. Please support the reentry and reintegration of our beloved Mainers.

Respectfully, Nicole Lemay