

Tracy Meggison  
Warren  
LD 178

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March 7, 2023  
Good morning!

To: Senator Beebe-Center, Representative Salisbury, and members of the Criminal Justice and Public Safety Committee:

My name is Tracy Meggison and I am currently a resident of the Maine State Prison in Warren. I am writing to you today to show my support for LD 178 and the effort to reestablish parole in Maine. I have lived in Maine my whole life and come from a family of eight, including both my parents. I was introduced to alcohol at a very young age and got addicted to it rather quickly. Before I realized what was happening, it was controlling my life in every sense of the word. In high school, I was a track star and had scholarships in place to pursue college and continue with track and field but my dependence on alcohol robbed me of making rational decisions and instead, I made many bad choices and one of them put me in the care of Department of Corrections for decades at the age of (19). Approximately 80% of incarcerated residents are in here because of their own struggles with addiction and bad decisions which resulted because of that addiction.

Upon my arrival at the State prison in Thomaston back in 1990, I made a promise to my family and especially my grandmother and my aunt that I would make the best of a bad situation and turn it into something positive and meaningful. I was very young and could have easily gone in a bad direction but instead went in a positive direction with the help and guidance from peer mentors in the prison. Decades later, I am proud of all my accomplishments and have worked tirelessly to help those in need. I have been part of the Hospice Team here at this prison for a long time caring for those actively dying. I have been a peer mentor to the patients in the Intensive Mental Health Unit for a very long time as well. I have my Recovery Coaching Certification and am Certified to coach by the State of Maine and am currently working on my (500) coaching hours. I have been a civic group leader for over 20 years and sit on several committees, working hand-in-hand with the administration and other residents to make this a better place for everyone. I have my Master Gardener Certification and am certified as a Personal Support Specialist (PSS). I am currently enrolled at UMA where I am going to be starting the (SART) Certification program soon. This stands for Substance Abuse Registered Technician, which is well above what a recovery coach does. I was also part of the K-9 Corrections Shelter Dog Program and had the pleasure of working/ training (34) dogs/puppies over a seven-year period. My passion is helping those who are struggling with substance use disorder, and I feel I am in a very good position to do that because of what I went through myself and what the dependence on alcohol has done in my own life. With the raging epidemic going on out in society and with the overdose rate here in Maine at an all-time high and climbing, there is a need for people like myself out in society who are willing to help others, so they hopefully do not end up down the same road I traveled or end up dying from an overdose.

Having parole back would give me and others the chance to do just that. Help others who are suffering on a daily basis and deserve to live with some sense of normalcy. I have done close to 33 years and am scheduled to be released, at this point in time, in early 2031. But having parole reestablished could potentially get me out sooner where I could begin helping those with their own recovery while continuing to work on my own. I have been clean and sober now for well over 23 years and have no desire to drink or do drugs again. I want to get out and help others, preferably while I am still able to be productive and have good health to be able to do it.

A major reason to reestablish parole is that it rehabilitates the residents and then guide them back into society, all the while minimizing the likelihood that they will commit a new offense. Parole gives one "HOPE". Hope then motivates the individual to better him/herself by getting their HI-SET, pursuing college, tutoring, mentoring,

coaching, facilitating, and volunteering all the while helping themselves and giving back to others in need. Hope also increases the sense of meaning in life and the realization of goals and dreams, even in the midst of adversity, hence: being incarcerated.

I support this bill because Parole allows those who have been incarcerated for committing a crime to earn back the right to re-enter society and return home to help support their families and loved ones. Parole makes communities safer than when residents are simply released after serving long sentences because with parole you are being monitored and supervised. Those who are on parole rarely recidivate and return to prison unlike those who are released after completing their full sentence. Maine is moving Corrections in a whole new direction, "The Maine Model of Corrections", plus all the advancements in technology in the Education Department, and the establishment of the ELU (Earned Living Unit) where I currently reside, where we are allowed to live as normal a life as possible as those out in society. So let us go one step further and reestablish parole and let us send a message to all the other states that Maine is leading in Criminal Justice Reform in every facet.

Thank you all for your hard work and consideration on this bill, I know so much work and effort has gone into this by so many people that are heavily invested in making this bill a reality.

In closing, let us make reestablishing parole back in the great state of Maine, a long-overdue reality.

Respectfully,  
Tracy Meggison