

Ellen Grunblatt
Jay
LD 178

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

My name is Ellen Grunblatt and I am a resident of Jay. I'm a retired physician, a therapist in private practice, and a member of the Franklin County Detention Center Board of Visitors. I'm writing in support of LD 178, the effort to reestablish parole in Maine.

In a rural state like Maine those who are incarcerated are members of our communities. Although Maine's incarceration rate is half that of the US, it is greater than that of most advanced democracies. This fact is shocking and shameful, and it's so much more than just a number. In a rural state like Maine those who are incarcerated are members of our communities. We know their families; we know their struggles, which often include poverty, mental illness and substance use disorder. We know the children who suffer from the absence of a parent and the loss of that parent's potential income. Prolonged incarceration is a solution to none of these problems. Incarceration itself exacerbates mental illness; it can increase exposure to substance abuse. Treatment of mental illness and substance use disorder while incarcerated, when it is available, is expensive for the taxpayer and divorced from community resources. Detention facilities are overburdened and understaffed and not equipped to manage these challenges. Reducing incarceration by making parole available when safe and appropriate would free up resources for development of robust reentry strategies to provide treatment and support, reduce recidivism, and strengthen communities and families.

Thank you for considering my opinion.