

Senator Pinny Beebe-Center,
Chair, Criminal Justice and Public Safety Committee
Maine State Legislature

Dear Senator Beebe-Center:

I wholeheartedly support the reinstatement of parole in Maine through passage of LD 178, An Act to Support Reentry and Reintegration into the Community. There is an abundance of human talent currently wasted in our prisons. Maine can parole those who have demonstrated positive behavior change, reduce exceptionally harsh long sentences, and create a robust system of reentry that will make our communities safer and stronger through the passage of LD 178.

For fifteen years I was responsible for administering the college program at the Maine Department of Corrections for the University of Maine at Augusta. I experienced first hand the power of education to transform offenders' behavior and the trajectory of their lives. Many DOC residents are talented, motivated and committed to success. UMA has awarded hundreds of degrees and, within that grouping of students, the recidivism rate is less than 5%. With parole as an incentive we can increase enrollment in the higher education program in our prisons and positively impact an even larger segment of the DOC.

We all need to live lives that are focused on positive goals and future plans. These are basic tenets of good mental health and productive living. Rewarding good behavior with reduced sentences will decrease incarceration costs for Maine without increasing crime.

With the passage of LD 178, resource allocation will shift from the costs of incarceration to the costs of supporting reentry. Those who are released may rejoin their families, seek employment and contribute to Maine's serious workforce shortages. The \$50,000 per year cost to incarcerate an individual in Maine can be redirected to facilitate a supervised parole system and return men and women to our communities sooner as productive contributing citizens. Let's tap into that enormous pool of talent that is sitting wasted in our prisons!

Under the leadership of Commissioner Randall Liberty, Maine is a national model for creating correctional programming that is creative, cost effective and rehabilitative. Maine's next innovative step must be to reintroduce parole to reward residents and support a healthy and holistic process for them to return to society.

Thank you for your work and for considering my opinion.

Sincerely,
Deborah Meehan, Camden

