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LD 178

To whom it may concern,

I am writing this letter in support of my fellow Maine Department Of Corrections residents. They first established a parole system in place to supervise and assist parolees to re-establish their place in the community. I do realize that parole was abolished on May 1, 1976, in Maine, but that was forty-seven years ago. So, when I heard of the possibility of parole in Maine it warmed my heart. This is a considerable growth for Maine Department Of Correction long-timer residents which includes my family and friends. The thought of them being able to have a chance of freedom, a chance to love, be loved again and a chance at living a life they deserve brings me joy. I am currently incarcerated for my own sentence for mistakes I made in life. I have gone through the process which, I believe everyone goes through eventually of realizing how life got outta hand and in return ended me up here. I do not believe that not everyone is capable of rehabilitation. I have thought about how I want to write this letter and what parts would be most important in order to get my point across. I decided that the facts, statistics, and history of parole have nothing to do with it. I have people I dearly care about that are incarcerated for things they were convicted of many years ago. I am a strong believer in people's ability to change and that sometimes due to the environment or certain situations mistakes are made. I believe that everyone should have the opportunity to have a second chance at the life they have missed. The criteria of evaluation that the board reviews to make a resident eligible for parole is extensive to prove they no longer pose a threat to society. By the legislator passing parole, it's reexamining what accountability looks like in the eyes of the justice system. I feel deeply for the victims as well, but society is not made safer when Maine's corrections system frustrates hopes and redemption. I believe in the dignity of people. You know, I believe in second chances. I believe in accountability and most importantly I believe in redemption. Parole allows someone who has exemplified good behavior and made progress in treatment to be released from prison with supervision under certain conditions. Everyone should at least have some review. Particularly given the length of confinement that people are subjected to in the United States. The bill in its current form might need to be revised, although questions about the process for victim input and risk assessments can be done. Incarcerated individuals should be permitted to testify at a virtual hearing. Instead, of just being represented by friends and family members who can speak about the capacity of people to change. I have found individuals who are incarcerated with me that I intend to keep in my life. I can hope and pray that I will be able to see them without having to come back to visit this prison. I want to introduce my family to these individuals who have changed my life in ways I can't start to explain. I have invested my time to get to know the long-timers and they deserve the right to show the justice system their growth. Some residents here are full-time students, working, volunteering, peer support, and exhibiting pro-social behavior. They have already or are close to serving their half-time and would make society a better place in my opinion. It would be nice to see Maine move forward with this bill and see people who either never thought they would see the outside again or at least not for a long time, be able to be free.

Sincerely,

Kyle M. FitzGerald