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LD 178

Testimony for Maine Bill LD 178 An Act to Support Reentry and Reintegration into the Community.

Testimony provided by- Deborah Clark-Standish Maine, Cumberland County. Senator Beebe-Center, Representative Salisbury, and members of the Criminal Justice and Public Safety Committee,

I am writing to you today in support of reinstating the parole system in Maine Bill LD 178. As a concerned citizen, I believe that reinstating parole will bring a multitude of benefits to our society and will ultimately contribute to making Maine a safer and more just state.

Firstly, parole allows for the rehabilitation and reintegration of individuals who have been incarcerated. Many prisoners have shown genuine remorse for their actions and have made significant strides in their personal growth and development during their time behind bars. With the opportunity for parole, these individuals can continue to receive the support and guidance they need to successfully reintegrate into society. This can be done through counseling, job training programs, and other supportive services that can be offered to parolees.

Secondly, parole can help reduce the overcrowding of prisons in Maine. With the current system, prisoners who are not eligible for parole must serve their entire sentence in prison, which puts a strain on resources and leads to overcrowding. By offering parole as an option, we can reduce the number of prisoners in our state's correctional facilities and decrease the financial burden on taxpayers.

Thirdly, parole can provide a greater level of accountability for those who are released from prison. Parolees are required to adhere to a strict set of rules and regulations, and any violation can result in their parole being revoked and their return to prison. This added level of accountability can act as a deterrent to those who may be considering engaging in criminal activity upon their release from prison.

Lastly, many other states in the US have a functioning parole system, which has proven to be successful in promoting rehabilitation and reducing recidivism rates. By reinstating parole in Maine, we can follow the example of these successful programs and work towards creating a more just and effective criminal justice system in our state.

My son has spent the past 18 years in prison and has worked diligently at changing his life around. He has taken responsibility for his actions in 2006 and has worked with his victim's mom for years in a very restorative way. Steven is a different man than when he went into prison. He is now a meditator, a yogi, a professional life coach, and a mentor to many people. He has talked about the trauma he went through and he is teaching me many things to support my own healing.

He has educated himself earning an associate degree, two bachelor's degrees; he completed master's degree and will soon start a PhD. He gives back where he can. I have met many individuals who have been released that he has worked with that have thanked me for my son's work.

Steven Matthew Clark has numerous accomplishments in prison that would allow him to be productive in the community. He is now working to bring an online platform to people around the world to help with criminal justice issues. He has paid for men to go to sober living housing when they get out. Steven has a good heart and the fight that took place in my son's home in 2006 where he defended himself and panicked should not define the man he is today.

Steven has an opportunity to teach at a University if he were released. He also is in love with a beautiful woman who cares deeply for my son. If he were released he would have a place to live and support of many people. Furthermore, my son always helped me when he was out. He would paint my house, mow my lawn, and even helped me with money at times. Having his support would mean the world to me. Having my son home for a Sunday dinner would mean the world to me.

In conclusion, I urge you to reinstate the parole system in Maine. Doing so will not

only benefit those who are incarcerated but will also have a positive impact on our society as a whole. My son has changed his life and I have met many men in the prison who deserve another chance at life. My son would be an asset in the community and I hope you give him that chance. Thank you for your time and consideration.