

Testimony of Darreyl Wright
Maine Criminal Justice Committee

Bill LD 178

An Act to Support Reentry and Reintegration into the Community

March 13th, 2023

To the Maine Criminal Justice Committee,

My name is Darreyl Wright, and I was fortunate enough to have met Steven Clark while I was incarcerated at the Maine State Prison, and I cannot overstate the impact he had on my life. Steven helped me through my addiction and provided me with the support and the tools I needed to rebuild my life. Today, I am a proud father, a husband, and I hold a successful job in the union. I have Steven to thank for helping me turn my life around and as a result I am here today to testify in support of LD 178 for the reinstatement of parole in Maine.

During my time in prison, Steven served as my mentor and helped me learn about psychology and mindfulness practices. He taught me how to manage my emotions with yoga and meditation, develop better communication skills, and set goals for my future. Steven also supported me in my recovery journey by serving as my Recovery Coach and encouraging me to pursue my certification as a recovery coach.

Thanks to Steven's guidance and support, I was able to successfully complete my recovery coach certification and develop skills that have been instrumental in my journey of sobriety. Today, I am a proud member of the recovery community and have dedicated my life to helping others who struggle with addiction. I have been out of prison for a few years and currently work in Boston in the union. Steven encouraged me and supported me with getting into a recovery house when I was released and inspired me to stay in one for a couple of years. I am just one of the many individuals who have benefited from Steven's dedication and commitment to helping others.

Research shows that incarcerated individuals who receive support in prison are significantly less likely to recidivate than those who do not. According to a study by the RAND Corporation, every dollar spent on prison education saves between four and five dollars in re-incarceration costs. Additionally, research has shown that prisoners who are able to maintain contact with their families while incarcerated have a better chance of successful reentry upon release.

In fact, according to research, providing education and vocational training, as well as mentoring, can significantly reduce the likelihood of recidivism among individuals leaving the criminal justice system (Cochran et al., 2015). Additionally, studies have shown that the use of mentors and coaches can lead to positive outcomes in areas such as reducing substance abuse, improving

mental health, and enhancing employment prospects (Sorenson & Andrews, 2001; Vaughn et al., 2011).

Steven and several other men at the prison embody these statistics. I know Steven has spent his time behind bars educating himself, mentoring others, and working towards becoming a productive member of society upon his release. I have no doubt that he will continue to help others, just as he helped me, when you release him on parole. His release would be an asset to the community and a savings to the taxpayers. That money could go to program to support our school children, our homeless, or our veterans.

It is time for Maine to reinstate parole and give individuals like Steven the opportunity to return to their families and communities. As a formerly incarcerated person, I can attest to the transformative power of education and support. I urge you to support LD 178 and to give deserving individuals like Steven the opportunity to rebuild their lives and contribute to society.

Therefore, I strongly urge the committee to support LD 178 and reinstate parole in Maine. Individuals like Steven should be given the opportunity to continue their rehabilitation and reintegration into society, where they can use their lived experiences and knowledge to help others, just like he did for me.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Darreyl Wright