

From: Marshall Mercier

To: Maine Criminal Justice Committee

RE: LD 178 Testimony

Dear Honorable Members of the Criminal Justice Committee in Maine,

My name is Marshall Mercier, and I am here today to testify in support of LD 178, An Act to Support Reentry and Reintegration. As a person who was formerly incarcerated, I understand firsthand the challenges that people face when trying to reintegrate back into society after serving time in prison.

I believe that reinstating parole in Maine is a crucial step towards ensuring that people who have served time in prison have a fair chance at successfully reintegrating back into society. Parole provides a mechanism for individuals to be released from prison before their full sentence has been served, but with conditions that they must follow in order to remain free. These conditions often include regular check-ins with a parole officer, participation in treatment programs or counseling, and avoidance of certain activities or individuals.

According to the Maine Department of Corrections, the recidivism rate for people released from prison in Maine is 46%. This means that almost half of the people who are released from prison end up back in prison within three years. This is not only detrimental to the individuals involved, but it is also a burden on our society as a whole. The cost of incarceration is high, and it is much more cost-effective to invest in programs that support successful reentry.

Studies have shown that parole can be an effective tool for reducing recidivism and promoting successful reentry. In fact, research has shown that individuals who are released on parole are less likely to be re-arrested than those who are released at the end of their full sentence. Additionally, parole can provide a range of benefits to individuals, such as the ability to access job training and employment opportunities, housing, and other essential services.

I have seen firsthand the impact that second chances can have on a person's life. As a recovery coach, I have worked with individuals who have been released and have seen the positive changes that they have made in their lives. With the support and guidance these individuals have been able to find stable employment, housing, and have successfully maintained their sobriety. Parole provides a crucial safety net for individuals as they transition back into society, and I believe that it can be an important tool for supporting successful reentry in Maine.

One person that comes to my mind for parole is Steven Matthew Clark. I have had the pleasure of knowing Steven Clark through our recovery work and helping people together. I ran a center in Down East Maine and Steven would work with me to help people who were getting out of prison. Steven recently earned his master's degree and we are all so proud of him. Parole would positively impact him and our Maine Community as he would be a helper in giving back with his

lived experience and education. Those of us in the outside Maine Recovery community believe that Steven has earned another chance to reintegrate back into society, just like many others in prison. Steven has used his time to change his life, now it is time to give him another chance.

In closing, I urge the members of this committee to support LD 178 and the reinstatement of parole in Maine. This bill has the potential to positively impact countless individuals who are in the process of reentry, and can help to reduce recidivism rates and promote public safety. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Marshall Mercier