

To: Senator Bee-Bee Center, Representative Salisbury, and members of the Criminal Justice and Public Safety Committee.

In Support of: Parole Bill LD 178

From: Richard Watson #68224

Maine State Prison
807 Cushing Rd.
Warren, ME 04864

My name is Richard Watson, and I have been incarcerated at the Maine State Prison in Warren since 2015. I am serving 22 years straight followed by 20 years of supervised release.

First off, I would like to thank the Parole Committee for all of your hard work and the time you have put into this effort. I know you are all extremely busy, and have a lot of important things to address, so thank you for taking the time to address re-establishing parole in Maine.

I understand that parole is not something that is just granted to someone, and there is a lot to consider when determining if someone is going to be a good candidate for parole. After all, we need to ensure that our communities remain safe, and we are not releasing someone that could still be a threat to society. However, there are some people that are currently incarcerated who have really put forth an effort in order to better themselves, and change their lives around. I know I am committed to making sure I never hurt anyone again, and I know many others who have the same outlook.

I am incarcerated for one of the most serious crimes that can be committed; I committed a sexual offense against my oldest daughter in 2014. I am very much ashamed of what I have done to her, and it still haunts me every single day; so I can't imagine what she has been through, and has to live with every day. I accept full responsibility for the crime I committed against my daughter, and realize that what I had done caused harm to not only my victim, but her family as well.

The people that I care about most are going through a lot of pain and suffering because of my actions:

- My oldest daughter and the victim in my case, has to live with the shame, disgust, and mental trauma that comes with the type of crime I had committed against her. She has to live without a father now, and most likely has trust issues due to my violation of trust with her.
- Her family has to live with supporting her, raising her, and trying to help her heal from the trauma I had inflicted upon her.

- My youngest daughter has to grow up without a father. She was 3.5 years old when I became incarcerated, and will be an adult by the time I am released. Her mother now has to raise her alone, and with minimal financial support from me.

- My family is going through the pain of losing me, and I may never see them again. My mother passed away from leukemia a year ago, and I wasn't there to help her or support her through her battle.

It tears me up inside to see all of the harm I have caused. I would do anything to be able to take it back, and do things differently. It kills me to know that my children are growing up without a father; I tried to be the best father I could be, and I always put my kids first, except for the time that landed me here. I understand what they are going through, because I grew up without a father. My father was incarcerated during my childhood for sexually abusing my half-sister, and I was also sexually abused as a child by both adult male and females.

There are many more effects that my crime and conduct has had on my loved ones and community, but I don't want you to have to read a book.

I have been incarcerated for almost 8 years now, and I have taken advantage of a lot of the programs and opportunities that the Maine Department of Corrections offers here at MSP. I try to make the best of my time here, and when I leave here I do not want to return, I want to contribute to my community again, and be the man that I have always wanted to be.

I currently work as a crew boss in the Industries wood shop program, and I am volunteering with VTI Derek Smith to help tutor his NCCER students in construction math or anything else needed. I am part of the Sunday Industries program which is put on by the NH Furniture Master's Institute, I am also enrolled in college through UMA, where I have one class left to finish my Associates degree in Liberal Arts. I currently have a 4.0 GPA. I am also working towards my Bachelor's degree in Business Administration, but may look into changing to a degree in order to become a Sex Offender Treatment worker as part of trying to help others, and reduce the likelihood of these types of crimes occurring.

I am case plan compliant. In September 2022, I completed "Living a Balanced Life (aka Problematic Sexual Behavior)". I have also completed multiple programs, such as: Psychology of Incarceration, College Readiness, Your Money Your Life, Cage Your Rage, Alternatives to Violence Project, Parenting classes, etc.

I have helped teach and tutor many students that were in pursuit of their Hi-Set, and continue to do so when I can. I am currently serving on the NAACP board as editor in chief for the prison newsletter. I am doing everything I can to better myself, as well as help those in need of tutoring, so they can better themselves.

If parole were to come back to Maine, and I was granted parole, I would like to seek out a better program for Sex Offender Treatment and Rehabilitation. Seek counseling for my own trauma, and help with how to deal with the daily thoughts of the trauma I have caused all of the people I care about most. I want to get back to work at a real job, help support and be there for my family, and once again become a contributing member of society.

Lastly and most importantly (if this is possible); with the help of my parole officer and/or victim services, I would like to give a heartfelt apology to my victim, and let her say whatever she has to say, and answer whatever questions she has for me. I don't know how to say it, but I would like to give her closure so it can helpfully aid in her healing process.

I would like to thank you for all of your time and consideration, and once again thank you all so much for all of your hard work.

Sincerely, Richard Watson