

Amanda Pena
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LD 178

Senator Beebe-Center, Representative Salisbury, and members of the Criminal Justice and Public Safety Committee,

My name is Amanda Pena, and I am a resident of Chantilly, VA. While I am not from Maine, I have relatives who have been formerly incarcerated, and have seen the impact of what that does to a family. From the experiences of my relatives, I saw these individuals who were incarcerated led lives where they were not given as many chances. Their positionality and environment did not allow for them to reach their full potential unless they worked at it. I come from a family where not many completed their high school education, and even less graduated with a college degree, but my relatives are one of the best people I know. They are kind, compassionate, willing to help anyone in need, and constantly remind me of the importance of genuine relationships. When they were incarcerated, we had holes in the family. While their decisions made were not great, those actions did not define who they are. Accountability for harm caused in any situation is needed, but everyone deserves a chance for a better life--to prove to themselves they can do it because they can.

My friend and colleague is currently incarcerated in Maine, and while I did not know him at the start of his time at the Maine State Prison, the person he is now speaks volumes. He is one of the most compassionate people I know and is doing incredible work outside of prison. I admire him for the work he has put in himself to be who he is today and the work he does for people outside to help advocate and ensure a better life for all.

I am writing to you today to show my absolute support for LD 178 and the effort to re-establish parole in Maine.

I support this bill because everyone deserves all the chances of life.