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LD 178

I am submitting testimony in support of LD 178, to reinstate parole and encourage successful reentry into the community for people who have used their time incarcerated to better themselves and those around them. There are people in Maine's state prisons who could be contributors to society and no longer need to be incarcerated, and reestablishing parole would give them a chance to show that they can do so.

Some people incarcerated in Maine have taken advantage of the opportunities offered to them by the very forward-thinking Commissioner, and bettered themselves through education. They deserve a chance to show that they've truly reformed their hearts and their lives.

I myself served six years in prison, in Virginia, and know there are always deserving people inside the system who no longer need to be there, because they've changed. Maine did so much earlier - but parole was abolished in many other states in the tough-on-crime 90's at the height of the crime epidemic, and was in many ways an overreaction and regressive step that doesn't benefit anyone. Longer sentences do not reduce crime, or help crime victims. They needlessly lock people away for decades, and make people incarcerated worse by taking away their hope. People inside should be able to earn their way home, by working, taking classes, earning degrees, and helping others. Incarcerated people like Steven Matthew Clark are doing all those things, and deserve a chance to come home after showing they're different people now.

I urge you to support LD 178 and give people a chance to earn their way back into the community.