



Volunteers of America®

NORTHERN
NEW ENGLAND

March 13, 2023

Senator Anne Beebe-Center
Representative Suzanne Salisbury
Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety
Maine State Legislature
c/o Legislative Information Office
100 State House Station
Augusta, ME 04333

RE: Testimony in support of LD 178: An Act to Support Reentry and Reintegration into the Community

Dear Senator Beebe-Center, Representative Salisbury, and Honorable Members of the Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety:

My name is Richard A. Hooks Wayman, and I am a resident of Maine and serve as the President & CEO for Volunteers of America Northern New England which is headquartered in Brunswick. I write in support of LD 178 for the opportunity to reinstate a system of parole in Maine.

Volunteers of America (VOA) Northern New England is a faith-based community nonprofit that works with households experiencing deep poverty, disabilities, and homelessness. For over a decade, VOA has received support from the Waldo County Sheriff's Office to manage a reentry program. The Maine Coastal Regional Reentry Center in Belfast is a residential center designed to give incarcerated men the skills, recovery treatment, and skills they need to live as successful citizens and employees.

After watching the nation's prison population grow by 500 percent since the 1980s, states have begun to seek ways to reduce prison rolls as part of a growing public groundswell that believes too many Americans are incarcerated. Maine has an opportunity to both decrease the number of incarcerated persons, who have paid their price to society, and further public safety by reinstating parole.

I would particularly like to highlight LD 178's language that proposes a spectrum of factors that should be considered and weighed in determining whether an inmate is given parole, recognizing that time spent imprisoned must be weighed with the individual's conduct, community service, participation in treatment, scoring under an evidence-based actuarial risk assessment tool, and educational advancement as balanced

against statements from victims and a potential parole sponsor or employer. I also applaud the bill's proposal to collect and assess outcome data for the parole system. The bill is thoughtful and balanced in its approach.

Maine has been an outlier among states in its refusal to stand up a parole system. While matters of criminal justice and public safety are complex and worthy of thoughtful planning, the weight of research indicates the probative value parole has in furthering public safety. Further, VOA would stand on the side of justice and equity in creating a system that offers individuals the chance to recognize the harm of their crime and to work to prove that their character and behaviors warrant a second chance to contribute to society.

I would ask you to give this bill serious consideration and your approval. Thank you for your public service to Maine.

Sincerely,



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