

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

My name is Lane Lewis and I am a resident of California. While I do not live in Maine, I am connected to this effort because of the close relationships I have formed with individuals who are incarcerated in the state of Maine, individuals who I believe pose no threat to society, and who I know are dedicated to helping heal the communities they once harmed. I am writing to you today to show my support for LD 178 and the effort to re-establish parole in Maine.

As a survivor of domestic and sexual violence, I am voicing my support because I know what an important part victims play in this conversation. Too often, I have heard objections to parole made in the name of “victims”. So, I offer my own story as a response to those objections.

I no longer call myself a victim, but a survivor. For years after my abuse ended, I remained a victim of it. My life and personality became shaped by it. So, I know firsthand how strong the desire for vengeance can be, and how tempting it is to mistake it for justice. To believe that my healing could only be found through my abuser’s suffering. And I don’t judge anyone who also feels that way. But, I’m not a victim anymore.

Over the years, I have found healing, in so many ways. If you had asked my position when I was 20, I would have said the pain my abuser caused me would last the rest of my life, so his pain should too. But now, at 36, I can tell you that the only thing my healing lacks is this: To be able to hear my abuser take responsibility for what he did, to hear him express remorse, and to see him given opportunities and resources to change and become a better man. To see him prove he is different and to let us move on from the pain and harm he caused us both, and to live the best lives we can. That’s the healing I am missing, the healing a lot of survivors are missing, and I believe that a survivor-sensitive parole process could support many of us in finding that healing.

And this is to say nothing of the many survivors who are themselves incarcerated, as a direct result of their victimization, and how such a parole process would support their healing.

I have worked with survivors for years as an advocate, and I don't discount that there are some who would argue against parole. And their positions are valid. But, I am not here to speak on behalf of all survivors; no one can do that. Because we are all different and our needs often change over time. This is why we need legislation that is responsive to our needs on a case-by-case basis, that allows for healing and restoration, and reflects the hope all of us need to have for the future. I believe that LD178 is an example of this.

So, when the topic of victims inevitably comes up in your deliberations surrounding this decision, I hope you will remember those of us who came forward today, asking you to vote in support of LD178.

Thank you so much for taking the time to hear my testimony,

Lane Lewis