

Antti Pentikainen
Think Peace Hub
LD 178

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

my name is Antti Pentikäinen. I serve currently as Research Professor at Jimmy and Rosalyn Carter School for Conflict Analysis and Resolution in George Mason University. I lead a center there studying how societies and individuals can heal from past harm and move beyond the divisions that hinder their safety, wellbeing and development. I also work for U.S. Institute of Peace and were Secretary for Leadership Group preparing legislation for National Truth, Racial Healing and Transformation Commission initiated by Congresswoman Barbara Lee. Besides that I support local truth telling and social healing processes through Think Peace Learning and Support Hub around United States, including Portland, Iowa City and Maine.

In the past years I have also been training prosecutors, judges, legal mediators, DOJ Community Relations Service officials among others in the U.S. and overseas. Neuroscience and trauma awareness are providing us new insights what happens in human brain when treat or injury occur. Parole is not significant only for those who are incarcerated but opens potential possibility also for those who have been harmed to heal. Societies that are trapped in cycles of violence become defined by what has happened rather than what they may become.

At this moment you are at a mountain top. Without passing LD 178 and reintroducing parole Maine is risking to be left behind from significant improvements in criminal justice systems studied and introduced elsewhere. Parole means a controlled opportunity for re-entry into the society that can be supported by multiple measures such as restorative justice. Restorative justice is a wonderful example where affected communities and support networks of the both the victim and perpetrator are invited into a voluntary process to identify necessary steps for safety, non recurrence and reparation. It is a process that guides to recognize also the emotional injury, which often remains unaddressed in traditional court proceedings, and take responsibility on non recurrence and repairing the harm on individuals and community. In restorative justice perpetrators don't get a free ticket but are held accountable by their own community to do what has been agreed with the victim and their support networks.

The work that I lead in the Carter School and in the Think Peace Hub are benefitting enormously from the contributions of Leo Hylton, currently serving 50-year sentence in Maine. Leo has been recently accepted into the PhD program at Carter School and we very much look forward to his research and contribution. Leo has already given us and many around the country hope that transformation is possible and can lead into healing. Today I ask that you would not take away his hope, but by restoring parole you would expand transformation and healing in the state of Maine.

Sincerely yours,

Antti Pentikäinen
Research Professor, Carter School
Convener, Think Peace Learning and Support Hub