

My name is Dan Fortune and I support LD 178.

I would like to start by thanking every person who is here today; whether it be the legislators who are hearing the testimonies, the friends and families of system impacted people who are testifying in person, the men and women who have come home and cannot leave those they met in prison behind, or those who are attending virtually. Your time, efforts, thoughts, prayers, hopes, and dreams mean more than words can convey.

To me the key to everything we are talking about today can be found in one word, REHABILITATION. When I google the word rehabilitation the definition I find is, ***the action of restoring someone to health or normal life through training and therapy after imprisonment, addiction, or illness.*** When a person breaks the social contract, commits a harm, and is sentenced to prison rehabilitation is the ONLY way that they will return to society a better person than when they went in, it is the only way that they can attempt to repair any of the harm that their actions have caused. I know this because I am currently serving life sentences in Maine State Prison and rehabilitation is one of the few things that gives my life meaning.

The first step of my journey to rehabilitation was admitting to my self that I was broken in ways that I could not hide anymore, in ways that I did not understand, and could not fix myself. Then I had to accept a version of me was going to die inside these prison walls, and the only control I had was what version it was going to be.

Fast forward 15 years, I have received my Associates, and bachelor's degrees, and I am currently enrolled in graduate school to get my Masters degree in Conflict Resolution. I am a Recovery Coach, a Peer Support/mentor, and do many other things here at the prison. I do not say these things to brag because they are not things to brag about, they are simply things I do to make my community better. My true role is to help the people in my life, recognize, identify, and begin the process of healing the trauma in their lives. "Hurt people, hurt people". Either in obvious ways that result in arrests and incarceration, or quieter less notable ways that leave invisible scars and poison on the inside.

Every single day I get up and work to be the best possible version of myself so that I can help other people become the best possible versions of themselves. I can never repair the harm that my actions have caused. What I can do, what I am

doing, and what I will continue to do, is make sure that I spend my life helping restore others to health.

That is what rehabilitation means to me.

None of the things I have done would have been possible if it were not for men and women who have seen things in myself that I did not, who have stuck by me, believed in me, gave me opportunities, loved me when I did not believe in or love myself. They have helped restore me.

With humbleness I ask that you restore parole, the committee has given you all the facts behind why it makes sense logically, it is my hope that today you have heard testimony that makes sense emotionally. Parole will offer every resident in Maine's D.O.C a chance to buy into their rehabilitation from the first day of their sentence. It would give them a tangible goal that must be EARNED by becoming active in bettering themselves. Parole provides a pathway to turning prison from warehouses of trauma into places of rehabilitation in which people return to society better than when they left.