

Volunteers of America Northern New England

14 Maine Street

Brunswick, ME 04011

March 12, 2023

Dear Members of the Maine Criminal Justice Committee,

I am writing in support of LD 178, An effort to Support Reentry and Reintegration into the Community.

As lead chaplain for VOA Northern New England, and ordained minister for nearly 50 years, I have observed first-hand how incarceration impacts individuals and their families. Oftentimes it is active addiction and/or substance abuse that causes good people to set aside their moral compass and succumb to behaviors that are detrimental during a time of vulnerability. I have witnessed how incarceration has caused a loss of job, loss of home, damaged relationships, and mental illness such as depression, even suicidal ideation and attempt. Having an appropriate parole system would, I believe, greatly reduce such calamitous losses weighing heavily on the family unit, as well as the state social services system.

I write to plead for an act of mercy by reinstating the parole system to the State of Maine as way of understanding that poor choices can be corrected, and an arrest may not have to lead to devastated lives. I believe parole offers our best chance at rehabilitation and an opportunity for them to give back to their community.

Thank you for considering this plea.

Rev. Dr. Albert Boyce, Chaplain VOANNE