

Amy Larkin  
Arundel

Senator Beebe-Center, Representative Salisbury, and honorable members of the Criminal Justice and Public Safety Committee, my name is Amy Larkin, I am a resident of Arundel and I am writing to you today to show my support for LD 178 and the effort to re-establish parole in Maine.

One reason I support this bill is because parole gives second chances. I believe the evidence shows we're locking up folks who could be contributing to their communities. Having an opportunity to participate in a supportive, restorative, and victim-sensitive parole system would help communities heal rather than simply punish an individual. Parole would mean fewer children have incarcerated parents and ensure that fewer people are damaged by the long-term effects of imprisonment.

I'm a caregiver for my 100-year-old grandmother, so I also support this bill from that perspective. With 20% of our prison residents in Maine over age 50, we're keeping folks locked up who are less likely to commit crimes as they age. Aging is a difficult process and I see it first hand every day. I know the time, energy, and money necessary to deal with new medical problems that pop up. Going through this process in prison must be a constant struggle. From a practical standpoint, we're also spending 3-9 times more to incarcerate an elderly person than a young one. Why spend taxpayer dollars on increased medical costs within the prison system? Since 1984, Life Without Parole sentences have increased significantly, which means here in Maine we'll be spending more and more on geriatric care as time goes on under the current system. How will we pay for that and why would we spend that money on continuing to keep folks locked up who could be back in our communities?

I, like 91% of folks surveyed by the ACLU, believe our criminal justice system needs reform. We have no proof that long sentences have a deterrent effect and from research we know that folks granted parole are 36% less likely to return to prison than those released with zero supervision. There are so many reasons to support parole in Maine, and the ones I've stated here are just a few. Thank you for your work, your time, and your consideration. I hope I can count on your support for LD 178.

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