

Nicole Kellett
Farmington, ME
LD 178

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

My name is Nicole Kellett and I am a resident of Farmington, Maine. I am a Professor of Anthropology at the University of Maine Farmington and have worked with women who are incarcerated in various states across the country, namely Arizona and New Mexico.

I am writing to you today to show my absolute support for LD 178 and the effort to re-establish parole in Maine.

I support this bill because I have seen firsthand what a difference parole can make in the lives of those who are incarcerated, especially women. While there are many examples I could site, I am going to briefly describe the experiences of one woman who was recently released from a 25 year to life prison sentence at the Arizona State Prison, Tasha. She was 15 when sentenced to 25 years to life in prison for taking the life of a young woman. She went through tremendous growth in prison because of the hope that one day she would be released and be able to try to repay society for her crime. During her parole hearing the board described her file as the fullest they had ever seen with over 100 earned certificates. Tasha was trained as a peer support specialist in prison and since released has worked with men and women throughout Phoenix supporting them through their own reentry experience. She has worked closely with a reentry center, New Freedom, helping them adapt their programming to better suit the needs of their team members. It is with the memory of Tasha's victim and her surviving relatives that keeps Tasha motivated to help others not commit the same mistake that she had. Without parole she would have not only lost all hope, but also would not be able to use her own experience and wisdom to support others in a positive path forward.

Thank you for your work and for considering my opinion. I hope I can count on your support for LD 178.