

TESTIMONY OF BRENDAN MCQUADE
Ought to Pass—LD 178

An Act to Support Reentry and Reintegration into the Community

Submitted to the

Criminal Justice and Public Safety Committee

March 13, 2023

Senator Beebe-Center, Representative Salisbury, and members of the Criminal Justice and Public Safety Committee, thank you for this opportunity to address the committee. My name is Brendan McQuade and I am an associate professor in the criminology department at the University of Southern Maine and, while I do not speak today on behalf of USM or the UMaine System, I do speak as a sociologist and criminologist who has studied punishment and penology and taught these subjects at the university level.

I am writing to express my belief that the state of Maine should reinstate parole. Parole is a system that allows individuals who have been incarcerated to be released early from their sentence, provided they meet certain criteria and conditions. This is an important tool for rehabilitation and reintegration into society, and it is currently unavailable in Maine.

The absence of parole is incongruous with the rehabilitative reforms put in place Maine Department of Corrections Commissioner Randall Liberty. The “Maine Model of Corrections” emphasizes normalization and humanization, with emphasis on destigmatization and respect toward offenders. The goal of the model is rebuild and transform lives.

Reinstating parole would further support these initiatives. Parole can provide an incentive for individuals to participate in rehabilitation programs, such as drug or alcohol treatment or job training, which can help them reintegrate into society and reduce the likelihood of future harmful behavior. Parole can help promote a sense of restorative justice by allowing individuals to make amends for their actions and demonstrate that they have changed, rather than simply being punished with a long prison sentence. Parole can give individuals a second chance to rebuild their lives and become productive members of society, rather than being permanently labeled as a criminal.

Moreover, there is little reason to incarcerate people for long sentences because people tend to “age-out” of crime for many reasons. Older people typically become more mature and develop a better sense of self-control, which can lead to a decrease in impulsive or risky behavior. As people get older, they may start families or take on more responsibilities at work or in their personal lives, which can make them less likely to engage in criminal activity. Older adults may experience physical or cognitive decline, which can make it more difficult for them to engage in criminal behavior. As people age, their social networks may change, with fewer

opportunities to associate with individuals who engage in criminal behavior. Older individuals may be more aware of the potential consequences of their actions, including the possibility of imprisonment, which can deter them from engaging in criminal activity.

Reinstating parole is the right and sensible course of action. It would further advance and support the rehabilitative reforms put in place in the MDOC. It would acknowledge the reality that crime is a young man's game and there is little reason to incarcerate people for so long.