

Ephriam Bennett
Warren
LD 178

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

My name is Ephriam K. Bennett and I'm writing this letter in response to LD178, a bill to bring back parole to Maine. But I must be truthful, I have mixed emotions about this bill being passed! Let me explain why. On February 8, 2009, I committed a brutal home invasion that nearly ended an innocent man's life.

The callous and inhumane way I beat and nearly stabbed my victim to death was the lowest moment of my life because I was not raised by my parents to commit crimes against humanity. I received 27 years, and rightly so!

Two months into my prison sentence, I started a Bible study and mentorship group taking full responsibility and accountability for the crime I committed. As I am sitting here writing this letter asking myself what will parole mean to me if granted to me, well my answer is that for me, personally it would not mean anything, where I am nearing the end of my sentence. Within a year, I will be eligible for the Supervised Community Confinement Program (SCCP). But it would mean everything to me because of the young men God has given me the privilege to meet and mentor, some for nearly their entire prison sentence and my entire 14 years of incarceration.

Men like Brandon Brown who I met as a young scared 21-year-old in Cumberland County Jail who was facing a charge of attempted murder. Now released from prison and working as a college professor. Someone I mentored his entire incarceration. Then there is Leo Hylton, Daniel Fortune, Damien Archer, Theodore Harris, Jeff Taylor, Abdi Awad, Julian Soto, Nathan Goodwin, Eric Byrd, Brad Chesnel, and countless others who God has given me the privilege to mentor.

These men have not only taken full responsibility and accountability for the crimes they committed against their victims and their families, as well as the communities they came from, by taking self-help programs to combat substance abuse, anger, spousal abuse, mental health, gang violence, and many other self-help classes just to name a few with many of those I've mentioned having either graduated from college or working towards graduating.

But I cannot say the same for a good 92% of the residents at the Maine State Prison who are only excited about parole because to them, they are only looking at it as a "get out of jail free card," and not doing the self-help work needed to prove true moral character and true redemption like the men mentioned, and that's the conflict I have about parole!