

Jay Davis
Belfast
LD 566

Senator Baldacci, Rep. Meyer and members of the Health and Human Services Committee. The undersigned supporters of Restorative Justice come from across Maine and have gathered on this page to support LD 566. We apologize for the lateness of this message, and we trust the legislators who will vote on this bill will have access to it.

Restorative Justice is a voluntary response to wrongdoing and crime that brings together both people who have caused harm and those who have been harmed in a search for the best resolution possible for a circumstance that can be painful and damaging. The discussions are facilitated by trained practitioners and entered into after sometimes lengthy sessions with the participants. We believe restorative justice is the most humane and effective way to respond to crimes when those who have been centrally affected wish to engage. This could include situations of physical and sexual abuse, because it gives to victims a primary role in crafting a meaningful resolution. We should also note that there are many programs nationally facilitating responses to significant violence that utilize models wherein parties to a harm are not brought into direct conversation, yet restorative values are still at the center of the response.

It is not yet common in Maine to have violent crimes resolved through Restorative Justice, though the days when that will be possible are shortening. Caring for victims of abusive crimes before a resolution process can be started is the job of counselors who work for government and private agencies. Their work is difficult and traumatizing at times; they are highly skilled in the concerns of power and control, are aware of local resources and are dedicated to centering the needs of those most directly affected. We read that burnout and job changing are common. We know that this session of the Legislature is recognizing the high value of trained and committed staff people. We are thankful for that recognition; it's past due, of course.

We consider ourselves dedicated allies with the victim advocate community in listening to, resourcing and centering the needs of those most directly harmed by crimes of interpersonal violence. We urge the 131st Legislature to support LD 566 and raise the wages of these valued advocates to a level that at least approaches being liveable.

Thank you for your time and attention.

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Senator Pinny Beebe-Center, District 12, Maine
Mindy Kane, Bangor, representative for the Penquis Restorative Justice Program
Randall Reischer, Fort Kent, County Restorative Practices
Leslie Ross, representative for Downeast Restorative Justice
Tim Hughes, Belfast
Leo Hylton, Warren
Sarah Mattox, Swanville
Jack Williams, West Rockport
Rachel Casey, Gray
Ed Modell, South Thomaston
Dr. Arthur Jones, Belfast
Dorothy Odell, Belfast
Karen Sites, Brewer