

Joseph Jackson  
Lisbon Falls  
LD 1779

To: Committee Members for Criminal Justice  
Fm: Joseph Jackson: MPAC Executive Director  
Re: letter in support LD 1779

05/02/2023

Good afternoon Senator Beebe-Center, Representative Salisbury and the Honorable Members of Criminal Justice

My name is Joseph Jackson, and I'm the Director of Maine Prisoner Advocacy Coalition (MPAC), MPAC is a statewide group formed in 2007. I am also a member of the Juvenile Justice task force. I am here today to testify in favor of LD 1779, An Act to Develop a Continuum of Care for Youth Involved in the Justice System and to Develop Alternatives for Juveniles Incarcerated in Long Creek Youth Development Center.

Recently I attended a court hearing for a man seeking to have his sentence for probation violation reviewed. The man (who suffers from substance use disorder) had been given a full revocation of his sentence due to substance use related issues.

When he shared his story with the court, he spoke of being sent to foster care at age 11. He shared that he had been emancipated as an adult at 14. He then outlined that he had been in and out of Long Creek from 14 till adulthood. Within a year of his release, he had received 20 years within the Maine Department of Corrections.

That man's testimony was particularly moving for me. Not only because he was a black man in an all-white proceeding, but because he was taking accountability and apologizing to every person he had harmed. I couldn't help but think of the harm that has been caused to him through his contact with Maine's Juvenile Justice System.

How many young people are we willing to throw away? How many young people with similar backgrounds are we consigning to the same fate as this man? How many more are we intending to fail before we fix this broken system.

LD 1779 lays out a plan towards a new, evidence-based and trauma-informed system of creating public safety for all, and support for the youth who end up involved in the criminal justice system.

This bill would direct the DOC to create an individual plan for all of the 24 youth currently committed and detained at Long Creek. This plan would involve conducting clinical assessments on all the youth in a multidisciplinary manner that determines what each individual youth needs and how those needs can be met in the community.

This plan would create a commission to review community resources available for youth and recommend how we should allocate current funding for Juvenile services.

It's time for Maine to do the right thing for our kids and it starts with finding out what our kids need and investing in community programs that fills those needs and reduce our reliance on Juvenile incarceration.

Thank you for your time and consideration!

Sincerely yours

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