

Mike Prue
Maine Youth Justice
LD 1779

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

My name is Mike Prue or MJ as others call me and I am an organizer/ 1 of the cofounders of Maine Youth Justice. I reside in Biddeford, Maine. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of L.D. 1779.

As a part of both MYJ and Maine Inside Out I have dedicated myself to trying to find better solutions for our youth rather than putting them within concrete walls and locked doors and isolating them from socialization. Being a former incarcerated youth I know from history that there is no longer a chance to learn or be rehabilitated by simply locking the key and turning away from a problem that can be fixed. I've seen both the mental damage and trauma that is provided while inside the cage and out. Now I'm not out to bash Long Creek to help my cause but to simply to let you understand that as a youth your rights almost feel completely gone and that your voice means nothing cause no one will listen. I've seen kids put in aggressive restraints to being tackled and leaving scars both bodily and mentally. I also saw kids being held in isolation for 23 hours a day due to low staff when the building and funds are over 18 million yet kids are treated as a threat to society for making a mistake. Now you tell me could you sit in a bland cold room for 23 hours with nothing but a bed and toilet? The pandemic alone has shown that mankind is not to be contained without insanity setting in. So why put our youth in that same situation.

Now if we could simply reinvest into our communities with other programs that will go out of their way to help and support our youths I think we can find better and more productive outcomes from troubled kids. If this bill passes it would initiate the process of building an entity that represents Maine's communities. Now is the time to reinvest the millions we spend for traumatizing kids so we can head in the direction of giving Maine's kids a chance to learn from their mistakes in better, actually rehabilitative resources without being isolated from the world.

Thank you for your consideration,
Sincerely, MJ