

Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety, attn: Jasmine Bocanegra  
c/o Legislative Information Office  
State House, Room 436  
100 State House Station  
Augusta, ME 04333

Re: LD 1978: *An Act to Enact the Reentry Success and Earned Time Act*

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

I am a clinical social worker, educator, mother, and Glenburn community member, and I am submitting this testimony in strong support of LD 1978. If enacted, this bill would establish important pathways for reentry into the community from incarceration for low risk individuals; pathways that are supported, safe, and effective.

To me, this is a racial justice issue. This is an economic issue. And this is a humanity issue.

We know that in Maine, people who are Black are 9.3 times more likely to be incarcerated than white people, and that Maine is the 9<sup>th</sup> worst state in our country for disproportionate incarceration of people of color. Our criminal justice laws have resulted in harm to folks of color through mass incarceration across our country, including in Maine. Like many other systemic issues that harm folks of color, many disenfranchised and low income white people have been hurt by these laws and policies as well.

We know it is extremely expensive to incarcerate people, and it doesn't make sense to incarcerate people who aren't a risk to public safety and who benefit from educational and vocational programs. Research shows that correctional programming like reentry programs and supervised community confinement are much less expensive and are much more effective at preventing re-offenses than incarceration.

In the past several years, I have re-dedicated myself to racial equity issues faced by citizens of color in Maine. The issues affecting people who are incarcerated affect us all because systemic inequities are rooted in racism and perpetuate harm and trauma in our communities. I have both a professional and personal stake in this – I have provided clinical social work to people affected by long term incarceration when they would have been productive citizens had they been released, and I have witnessed the trauma to them and to their families. I also have children who I want to grow up and live in Maine communities that are fair and compassionate, and where we develop and implement sensible and affordable responses to societal problems. I am someone who has never experienced incarceration, nor had a member of my immediate family incarcerated, but this issue hits close to home. I truly believe that as a white person, I must speak up to systemic racism for the betterment of us all, and enacting this bill would go a long way to remedy a systemic problem that perpetuates trauma and harm.

For racial equity, economic, and humanity reasons, I urge you to vote in favor of LD 1978.

Respectfully submitted,



Ann Hartman LCSW