

Dear members of the Criminal Justice Committee,

My name is Nathan Goodwin, and I am a resident at Maine State Prison where I have been incarcerated since 2010. During my incarceration I have been blessed to volunteer with the MSP Hospice team. I began my training to become a Hospice volunteer in 2014 and have consistently served with the team since then. This program has not only provided critical care to those in need but has also transformed the lives of those who serve, fostering growth and redemption.

Humility is one of the primary skills we learn as we train and serve as Hospice volunteers, so I say this with the utmost humility so that you understand who I am. I have served the community at MSP as a Hospice volunteer longer than any other resident of MSP. I have served when the group had 23 members and I have served when there were only two of us covering all the shifts.

I have submitted two statements for your committee meeting on 1/27/25 regarding LD 18 – 2025. The other one was created by the Hospice team with feedback from all members. This letter is my personal thoughts on LD 18.

My experience with Hospice care at the Maine State Prison has shown me how to show unconditional love to a fellow human being. Prior to my service in hospice every time I thought I had shown unconditional love there was something in it for me. My experience has shown that those residents who take the hospice training looking for something in it for them are quickly weeded out when the service work gets difficult. What makes this the transformative program that it has been is that we serve for the “right” reasons. This is also what makes this program so hard for security staff to come to grips with. When security, who are trained to look for manipulation and underhanded behavior see residents serve their fellow man with no compensation it forces them to explore the human worth of the men they are overseeing. I have officers explain the difficulty they have after watching me serve my community and then having to do their jobs “overseeing” me in general population situations.

It is my firm belief that creating any monetary incentive for men to serve in hospice will destroy the very things that keep this program pure and effective at fostering personal growth. There is an innate purity in serving with no compensation that in my opinion will be lost when any form of monetary incentive is provided. While I understand the intent of raising funds for hospice-related expenses, introducing compensation for volunteers undermines the selfless service that defines this work. It is my opinion that implementation of monetary incentives will destroy all that we have built, and I have poured my heart, soul and tears into for over a decade.

“In closing, I urge you to reconsider including hospice volunteers in LD 18-2025. Introducing monetary incentives risks undermining a program that has brought dignity, transformation, and hope to many. If this measure proceeds, I respectfully ask that hospice volunteers be excluded from its provisions. This will ensure that the heart of this program remains intact, preserving its unique and irreplaceable value. Thank you for your time and for considering my perspective.”

Thank you for your time.

Nathan Goodwin