

Representative Hasenfus, Senator Beebecenter, and Honorable Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety.

My name is Anghy Tehuitzil, and I am a resident of Augusta, Maine. I represent Maine Youth Power, a youth-led movement dedicated to building a future rooted in human dignity, equity, and access for all—especially in rural and suburban Maine. I am here today to support *LD 244, An Act to Provide Safe, Short-term Housing to Indigent Individuals Recently Released from Correctional Facilities*.

Imagine this: After serving 25 years in prison for an offense committed in their youth, a former inmate steps outside, taking their first breath of freedom. They are eager to rebuild their lives and make up for the years locked up. But instead of opportunities, they are met with overwhelming obstacles—mental health struggles, family reunification, secure employment, and worst of all, the uncertainty of where they will sleep that night. Even if lining up early at homeless shelters many former inmates find themselves turned away due to overcrowdedness. They are left without options but to sleep in the streets. And even when housing is available, barriers like their criminal record, credit checks, security deposits, and housing discrimination—especially against people of color—make it nearly impossible to find housing.

Reentry and recovery advocates across Maine such as the Maine Prisoner Advocacy Coalition are working tirelessly to create more transitional housing options, knowing well that housing stability is a pillar for public safety, rehabilitation, and reducing the risk of recidivism.

Providing short-term housing for just the first two months after release can be the critical first step toward long-term stability. It gives individuals the foundation to reconnect with their families, seek employment, and rebuild their lives with dignity.

I urge you to *vote ought to pass on LD 244*.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Anghy Tehuitzil

