



Re: LD 246 - An Act to Establish the Option of Sentencing Alternatives for Primary Caregivers

February 26, 2025

Dear Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn, and distinguished members of the Committee on Judiciary, my name is Gia Drew, and I am the Executive Director of EqualityMaine, which has been advocating on behalf of Maine's LGBTQ+ community since 1984. We urge you to support LD 246 - An Act to Establish the Option of Sentencing Alternatives for Primary Caregivers - and we thank Senator Rachel Talbot Ross for her leadership on this critical issue.

LGBTQ+ adults are incarcerated at three times the rate of the total adult population, and their overrepresentation in the carceral system is due to their experiences of high rates of homelessness, poverty, unemployment, discrimination, and violence.¹ The number of LGBTQ+ parents and caregivers in prison is not well documented, but according to Black & Pink's landmark National LGBTQ Prisoner Survey of over a thousand incarcerated LGBTQ+ people, 45% reported having children.² Over 50,000 Maine youth have experienced multiple Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs), with parental incarceration being a significant factor. The research is clear: children with multiple ACEs are more likely to face mental health challenges and behavioral problems, suffer from social withdrawal and isolation, economic hardship, and housing instability, and perform poorly in school and have higher absentee rates.³

The wellbeing of those adults and children who receive care from someone else is integrally tied to the decisions and outcomes of the justice system. LD 246 creates an opportunity to reduce the number of children affected by parental incarceration, lessen the strain on various state systems, and recognize and mitigate some of the numerous effects that incarceration can have on families. We urge you to vote "ought to pass" on LD 246.

Thank you,

Gia Drew (she/her)
Executive Director, EqualityMaine

¹ <https://www.sentencingproject.org/app/uploads/2022/10/Incarcerated-LGBTQ-Youth-and-Adults.pdf>.

² <https://www.issuelab.org/resources/23129/23129.pdf>.

³ "2024 Maine KIDS COUNT® Databook." Maine Children's Alliance. <https://mainechildrensalliance.org/data/>.