

Testimony in Support of LD 1335: An Act to Prohibit Life Sentences

To: The Honorable Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn and Honorable Members of the Judiciary Committee

My name is Santanu Basu of Warren, Maine. I write to you to express my strong support for LD 1335, an act to prohibit life sentences in Maine. This bill is not just about legal reform; it is about justice, redemption, and human dignity.

I have witnessed firsthand the profound impact of incarceration on individuals and families. In my personal lived experience(s), I have seen people who have committed serious crimes but have, over decades, transformed their lives through education, mentorship, and deep personal reflection. The tragedy is that many of these individuals are condemned to die behind bars, despite clear evidence of their rehabilitation.

We, as a society, believe in second chances. Yet, life sentences without parole deny individuals the very opportunity to demonstrate that they have changed. Studies show that people serving long sentences, particularly those who committed offenses in their youth, have some of the lowest recidivism rates. According to the Sentencing Project, the rate of reoffending for individuals released after decades in prison is **less than 2%**. This statistic alone challenges the notion that life sentences enhance public safety.

Not a focal point, but beyond the human cost, there is an undeniable financial burden. Housing an aging prison population, many of whom pose no threat to society, drains taxpayer resources that could be better spent on education, mental health services, and rehabilitation programs. Several states reformed their sentencing policies and found that allowing parole opportunities have **saved millions while preserving public safety**.

Importantly, we must recognize that incarcerated individuals do not forget their actions, nor do they escape the burden of guilt and shame. Those who have taken a life or caused great harm live with the weight of their past choice(s). They are reminded daily of their wrongdoing with a life sentence; rather, they need an opportunity to prove that they are more than their worst mistake. Additionally, for the families of victims, the path to healing is often **not in perpetual punishment, but in the opportunity of forgiveness**, through witnessing the growth and transformation of the person who harmed them. While grief is a lifelong process, many find healing through second chances that include true accountability and genuine remorse from those who have changed.

I urge you to pass LD 1335 and give people a reason to rehabilitate, to hope, and to prove that they can contribute positively to society once again. Justice should not be about permanent condemnation but about accountability and the possibility of redemption. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully yours,

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