

Testimony of Linda Small

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In Support of LD 648 – An Act to Expand the Supervised Community Confinement Program
Before the Criminal Justice and Public Safety Committee

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Good afternoon Senator Beebe-Center, Representative Hasenfus, and the distinguished members of the Criminal Justice and Public Safety Committee. My name is Linda Small from Portland, and I am the Executive Director of Reentry Sisters. I'm testifying today in strong support of LD 648, which modestly expands eligibility for the Supervised Community Confinement Program—SCCP.

This bill would allow individuals who committed their offense before the age of 26 and have served at least 15 years of their sentence to be considered for community placement under the existing SCCP criteria. It's a smart, compassionate, and evidence-based step forward.

We know that brain development continues until around age 26. Young people often lack the impulse control, foresight, and emotional regulation that comes with maturity. Maine has some of the harshest sentencing laws in the country without a parole system. Too many people, especially those sentenced in their youth, spend decades behind bars with no realistic pathway to earn a second chance.

SCCP offers that chance. It is not automatic and not easy. It requires evaluation, accountability, and demonstrated growth. But it gives people something to work toward—an incentive to transform, contribute, and come home ready to succeed. I know women who are incarcerated who have lost hope and faith in a justice system that recognizes their rehabilitation and transformation. They feel no matter what they do, they'll never be good enough to contribute to their families and communities.

At Reentry Sisters, we've seen what's possible when people are given the chance to reenter society with the right supports. We've also seen the heartbreaking failures of straight release—when someone is let out after decades with no housing, no job, no ID, and no plan. Rather than justice for Maine families and communities, it feels like abandonment for those who have paid their debt to society.

LD 648 is not about opening the prison gates. It's about building a bridge—one that allows people who have already served significant time, demonstrated growth, and committed to change, to rejoin their communities in a structured, supported way. It's about safety, dignity, and the belief that no one should be forever defined by the worst thing they've ever done, especially when they were still growing up when it happened.

I urge you to support LD 648 and help create a system that values rehabilitation, recognizes the science of brain development, and offers real second chances.

Thank you.