

## **LD648- An Act To Expand the Supervised Community Confinement Program**

I am a woman in long-term recovery and formerly incarcerated. Today, I am speaking about LD648- An Act To Expand the Supervised Community Confinement Program.

In 2019, I was sentenced to 15 years, all but 6 years suspended. While incarcerated, I was blessed to have been given many opportunities that led me to a successful future. I earned a yoga scholarship, gained certifications in many different trades, and enrolled in UMA in the Mental Health and Human Services Program. In 2023, I was accepted for SCCP. I chose to be released to a sober house because setting boundaries and working on myself while taking on this new life on the outside was essential in achieving my goals. This program allowed me to acclimate to being back in society while still under the supervision of the DOC, which gave me the chance to build relationships in the recovery community, continue to focus on my schooling, and finish my yoga training, all while integrating back into my children's lives.

While out on SCCP, I received my trauma-informed yoga certification, my Associate's degree, an Intentional Peer Support Specialist Certification, worked with participants in the Kennebec County Co-Occurring Disorder Courts, obtained a position as a recovery coach for the Knox County Adult Treatment Court and most importantly I got an extra year that was not expected to spend with my children and bond after years of being physically absent. I successfully completed the Supervised Community Confinement Program in January 2024.

While incarcerated, I met some intelligent individuals who had made some bad choices and are remorseful for them. All these people were not “bad,” as society made them to be, because they were incarcerated; they all have a story, and some of them were young women living with mental health or substance use disorders that did not have any positive role models or a support system when their crime took place. Emotional control is a powerful skill, and without the knowledge of ways to use it, it can negatively control you, impacting not only yourself but also others' lives as well.

As we all know, humans are not perfect; we make mistakes, but we should not be defined by our mistakes. It is what we do with those mistakes that should define us and give us a second chance in life. When I say this, I am referring to some of the individuals who are currently incarcerated, serving long-term sentences since a younger age, who were not given a fair first chance in life due to their incapacities, whatever those might have been. Individuals who have taken the time to comprehend and acknowledge what they have done and made meaningful growth and changes should be allowed that second chance. Of course, many factors should be considered when rewarding someone with that opportunity. If the committee does not allow this LD648 to pass, it is not giving these residents the chance to prove that rehabilitation is working within Maine's criminal justice system, and that is the state's goal, right? Let's make a change, vote yes on LD648.

Thank you.

Danielle Ward