

Testimony in support of LD 648
the Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety
April 23, 2025

Senator Beebe-Center, Representative Hasenfus and distinguished members of the Committee:

My name is Sarah Johnson and I am a resident of Sanford.

I am writing in support of LD 648, An Act to Expand the Supervised Community Confinement Program.

LD 648 brings hope to each person incarcerated prior to age 26 that they may earn eligibility for Supervised Community Confinement. It also brings hope to a family and community, fosters rehabilitative work, educational motivation, and supports the well being of Maine socially and economically.

This is described eloquently in a report I will submit in another testimony, released in January 2023 by Susan Howley, Project Director, Center for Victim Research at the Justice Research Statistics Association titled “[Reflections on Long Prison Sentences, A Conversation with Crime Survivors, Formerly Incarcerated People, and Family Members](#)”. *As one survivor put it, “When a young person receives a sentence of more than 20 years, that young person and their family also lose that life-the community also loses that life.”*

Research is available, including the Vera Institute of Justice Report: [A New Paradigm for Sentencing in the United States](#) that “*People “age out” of crime. Violent crime, measured by arrest rates, is much more prevalent among younger people from their late teens to early twenties. The rate of arrest for such crimes begins to sharply decline after this point and is more than halved by the mid-thirties. This means that people who commit crimes, even if they once presented a danger to others, may be safely released much before the end of the 20-, 30-, and 40-year or life sentences they are now serving.*”

Research on brain development showing that ‘emerging adulthood’ reaches into the mid and late twenties is also available as in this [Sentencing Project Report](#) noting “neurobiological and adolescent developmental psychology research finds that late adolescents share more characteristics with children and teenagers than with adults. This is particularly evident in emotionally charged situations.”¹

¹ Casey, B. J., Simmons, C., Somerville, L., & Baskin-Sommers, A.(2022). Making the sentencing case: Psychological and neuroscientific evidence for expanding the age of youthful offenders. *Annual Review of Criminology*, 5(1), 321–343.
<https://doi.org/10.1146/an-nurev-criminol-030920-113250>.

There are also vast community based social and economic benefits to expanding SCCP. Allowing those who were incarcerated at a young age to earn SCCP by meeting rehabilitative standards, achieving educational goals and vocational certifications and then re-entering the workforce where they will contribute locally and nationally is all for the greater good.

Maine needs this well trained, well educated, motivated and dedicated workforce. I recently spoke with a Rotarian who was clearly sad that she had struggled so much before hiring a formerly incarcerated person. She suddenly lit up describing what a wonderful worker and friend her new employee had become, and what a benefit the decision had been to her business.

The US Chamber of Commerce has a wealth of information on “[The Workforce Impact of Second Chance Hiring](#)”. *The numbers show that formerly incarcerated individuals want to work. More than 93% of formerly incarcerated individuals between the ages of 25 and 44, those in their prime working age, are actively working or looking for work.*

Their report points to a number of reports from businesses benefitting from hiring those with criminal records, including [Jamie Dimon, CEO of JP Morgan](#) who “*reiterated his long-held view that skills are equally as important as education when it comes to finding the right candidate. And while hardships suffered previously in life may not be mentioned on a CV—while a Harvard business degree would be displayed proudly—Dimon said that doesn’t mean these experiences should be discounted in the hiring process. Data from JPMorgan suggests that the bank has indeed uncovered a new talent pool. In 2023, 9% of JP hires in the U.S. had a prior record—which had no bearing on their roles. The year prior, the banking behemoth hired [over 4,600 people](#) with “criminal backgrounds”.*

The Chamber of Commerce believes in and sees the benefits of Second Chance Hiring to such a degree that they have developed an [Employer Guide](#). This guide informs businesses of the Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC) to recoup some wages, federal fidelity bonding and the availability of Growth Opportunity Grants. It also described the positive working environment enjoyed by all employees stating “*in a recent [survey](#), 66% of employees expressed pride in working for a company that offers training, guidance, or mentorship to individuals with criminal records to help them reintegrate into the workforce.*”

The Chamber also notes “*[Data from SHRM](#) shows that 85% of human resources leaders and 81% of business leaders say that second chance hires perform the same or better than other employees.*”. Their conclusion is concise: “*Fewer taxpayer dollars spent on incarceration means more resources can be invested in the community.*”

All of this certainly applies to Maine. Working locally also means spending locally and paying taxes. It means caring for family, possibly young children or aging parents in need of assistance. It means supporting Maine businesses and not national monopolies when purchasing toothpaste and soap, food, clothing, gas and coffee. The sooner a person may return to the workforce the greater generational wealth they can build for their family. An employer may be more inclined to provide

advanced training and a path to advancement to someone they feel may be employed with them for a long period of time. A [Colby Laboratory for Economics Studies report from March 2023](#) begins with the unfortunate but well-known fact that “*Ask any business owner from Kittery to Calais to Fort Kent about the biggest challenges they face today and virtually every one will say the same thing - they can't find people who want to work*” and concludes with “*According to our results, **an increase in Maine's workforce of 100 employees spread equally across these five industries would result in approximately \$14.7 million in increased economic activity.** Roughly 43 other jobs would be supported by this output through indirect and induced effects on Maine's economy.*” Maine has a potential workforce that is well educated, skilled, and enthusiastic about work.

Having a family reunited is a cost savings in health care that can't be calculated, but is obvious. The stress of being incarcerated, and of having a parent or family member incarcerated is detrimental to the physical and mental health of everyone impacted. A statement from a friend last year described this perfectly to me. “I'm home with my son and together we will see that he graduates High School and goes on to the life he deserves”. This is a woman who many times during her incarceration spoke of her deep concern for his well being and her remorse, fear and sadness for not being able to participate more in his life. This is an unspoken illness that prevails in all families impacted by the carceral system, and one that we can help heal. In this case, her son did graduate, and she was there to celebrate. They live together now, and are both working and continuing their education. I'm sorry they don't live in Maine, but they are living life “as it should be”.

I hope you will support LD 648.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sarah Johnson

Sanford, Maine.

https://assets.foleon.com/eu-central-1/de-uploads-7e3kk3/41697/reflections_on_long_prison_sentences_-_howley.4d54a984fb61.pdf

<https://vera-institute.files.svdcn.com/production/downloads/publications/Vera-Sentencing-Report-2023.pdf>

<https://www.sentencingproject.org/app/uploads/2023/09/Left-to-Die-in-Prison-Emerging-Adults-25-and-Younger-Sentenced.pdf>

<https://www.uschamber.com/workforce/data-deep-dive-the-workforce-impact-of-second-chance-hiring-3>

<https://fortune.com/2024/07/15/jamie-dimon-jpmorgan-hiring-employees-ex-felons/>

<https://www.jpmorganchase.com/newsroom/stories/economysecondchance>

<https://www.uschamber.com/workforce/employer-guide-to-second-chance-hiring-programs-and-tax-credits>

<https://secondchancebusinesscoalition.org/why-it-matters>

<https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/43edf1b083f345ce888b115e99ad3596>