

Maine PRISONER ADVOCACY Coalition



April 23, 2025

Senator Beebe-Center, Representative Hasenfus and distinguished members of the Criminal Justice and Public Safety Committee:

My name is Jan Collins, I am Assistant Director of Maine Prisoner Advocacy Coalition (MPAC) an organization committed to ethical, positive, and humane changes in Maine's prison system. I am here in support of [LD 648](#) An Act to Expand the Supervised Community Confinement Program.

My current bedside reading is a book by George Vaillant called Triumphs of Experience. The text is based on the Harvard Grant Study which follows 248 white males from the sophomore Harvard classes of 1931, 1940, and 1941. The author notes that this type of longitudinal study allows researchers the opportunity to visualize the passage of time free of the distortions of memory. "While butterflies recalling their youth tend to remember themselves as young butterflies, perspective studies capture the realities that butterflies and caterpillars are the same people."¹

Forgetting that they were once caterpillars is not a luxury given to people in prison. They are reminded of it on a daily basis, sometimes moment by moment. They cannot escape their crimes.

The testimony presented today has outlined the neurological basis for why crime rates are highest for individuals under the age of 26 years and why crime rates taper off as we age. It also outlines why that will never be different, no matter how many people we lock up and no matter how long their sentences are. Biology is destiny.

The courts have recognized this difference in biology and have put in place guidelines that treat youth different from adults. However, Maine laws have not caught up with the most recent research.

No one wants to release individuals who are a danger to community safety. The Supervised Community Confinement Program has very stringent requirements in place to evaluate an individuals readiness for community confinement. They will be supervised by the MDOC for the remainder of their sentence. The MDOC does not re-litigate the crime, it reviews the progress towards accountability and redemption.

You will hear the prosecutors testify that a crime committed decades ago should be the arbiter of who a person is today. You may decide they are right.

But, I am a survivor of assault, domestic violence and sexual assault and I do not believe that creating more harm, more pain, is a solution to past harm. We can not heal wounds by creating more wounds.

We must decide whether the role of prisons is endless punishment, or whether the role is as professed, to rehabilitate. Is a caterpillar always a caterpillar or can it become a butterfly? If it can become a butterfly, should it be kept in a cage?

I would be grateful for a unanimous ought to pass vote on this bill.

Thank-you,
Jan

¹ Valliant, George. Triumphs of Experience: The Men of the Harvard Grant Study. Belknap Press, Cambridge, MA. 2012.