

To the Honorable members of the Criminal Justice and Public Safety Committee and Representative Milliken,

I'm Richard Stahursky and I'm writing this testimony in support of LD 648. I'm a man who has been sentenced to life in Maine. I originally at the age of 23 I was sentenced to 19 years for armed robbery. Although this bill does not apply to my situation because I'm outside the age brackets the bill is focused on, I would've originally qualified for my previous offense. I was 23 when I first entered Maine State Prison but it was my 4<sup>th</sup> time in prison; I've spent most of my life in penal institutions. At 23 I wasn't mature enough to comprehend the severity of my actions; I grew up in an extremely abusive home with my stepfather molesting my sister and physically abusing me and my mother on a daily basis. I was kicked out of the house at 12 years old without a place to go which made me a child of the streets. I wasn't given an opportunity to go to high school instead I had to enter Maine State Prison to receive my high school diploma. In the time spent at MSP I've known a number of men who have committed their crimes when they were in the early 20s who genuinely evolved from boys to men through perseverance and hard work. I know when at 23 years old I first was given 19 years I felt like my life was over because I feared I wasn't going to get any help in rebuilding myself. I had two children already two boys one at 17 years old and I had my other son at 19 years old. Nobody taught

me how to be a parent but the length of my incarceration forced me to see my children grow up in pictures. Today, I'm 46 years old I'm engaged to my fiancée and I hope to be given the opportunity at some point to rejoin society and be a husband and a father. Hope is the only thing that keeps me alive, that gives me a reason to keep working on my future. I cannot put into words what having hope means to fellow incarcerated men. I see every day young men giving up their life due to hopelessness. I strive to better myself as a man every day. I strive to prepare myself to reenter society and contribute to it. Countless of young men have been made to feel worthless and a burden because of their incarceration while I believe these young men have great potential to repair the harm they've caused. I yearn to give back to the community and show everyone that my mistakes don't define. In conclusion, I ask you to please vote to pass this bill. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Richard Stahursky

Richard Stahursky  
Maine State Prison Warren (transferred to New Jersey State Prison)  
LD 648

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