

Maine PRISONER ADVOCACY Coalition



May 5, 2025

Senator Beebe Center, Representative Hasenfus, and honorable 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 neither for nor against **LD 1844 An Act to Expand the State's Workforce by Supporting the Transition from Incarceration to Employment.**

First, we very much appreciate Representative Sayre's attention and devotion to preparing currently incarcerated individuals for workforce reentry. The program he has outlined in this bill is essential and would make a huge difference in providing the skills necessary to be successful in reintegrating into the community.

Second, we appreciate the MDOC's recent hiring of a reentry specialist who will be a great addition to the team.

When I first talked about this bill with Representative Sayre, he told me about a much bigger vision. Non-profits or government agencies in the community would provide the initial training to residents on the inside, who would then become the trainers for subsequent classes in each of these area. Many organizations and government agencies on the outside are already providing training to individuals and groups in our communities so are ready and willing to do the same in our prisons. As he envisioned it, this would be a dynamic educational experience prepared to provide the skills for life long success.

Here is the problem, the anticipation and reality of reentry is extremely stressful. Although there can be excitement and anticipation, there is also fear and

confusion. That is especially so for individuals who have no one to welcome them home when they leave. There are a good number of people who will be dropped on the street with a garbage bag full of their meager possessions and no idea where they will eat or sleep in the next 24 hours.

This is not a recipe for success.

Representative Sayre's original vision would have included everyone in the MDOC's care who was within 6 months of release (with the possible exception of those who are already in work release programs or who are enrolled full time in educational programs) regardless of their security level. It would have required that everyone in that category have six hours a day out of cell with four hours of pre-release programming.

The last part is of particular significance. A number of individuals will be released directly from housing where their time interacting with the general population of the prison is limited or non existence. These individuals are the ones most likely to find themselves re-incarcerated. They are neither emotionally, psychologically, or socially prepared for the challenges of reentry. They are anxious and fearful.

It is of utmost importance that these individuals receive the benefits of pre-release programming. That is why we are suggesting an amendment to the bill that would ensure their participation.

Thanks again to representative Sayre for presenting this bill and the Maine Department of Corrections for their continued commitment to rehabilitation and reentry.

Thank-you for your consideration.

Jan

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Title 34-A: CORRECTIONS
Chapter 3: CORRECTIONAL FACILITIES
Subchapter 1: GENERAL PROVISIONS
Article 2: COMMITTED OFFENDERS GENERALLY

§3035. Rehabilitative programs

Recommend renumbering paragraphs, making this new paragraph number 1

1. All residents of Maine's Department of Corrections facilities regardless of housing location, housing status or security level shall participate in intensive re-entry preparation for the six months prior to their statutory or mandatory release date. Residents on work release in the community, who are employed full time in remote employment, or who are in full time educational programming may be exempted from the provisions of this statute.

a. In addition to the 2 hours daily provided by the MDOC for recreation and showers, four additional hours out of cell will be provided for classes, workshops, counseling, job training, and socialization for a total of six hours out of cell daily Monday through Friday.