

Testimony before the 132<sup>nd</sup> Maine Legislature.

Judiciary Committee

**Testimony in favor of LD 1965: Resolve, to Establish a Task Force to Create a Court Navigation Program Plan**

Chairpersons Senator Carney and Representative Kuhn, and Members of the Committee, my name is Suzanne Rudalevige and I live in Cape Elizabeth.

I want to say, up front, that my vision of making our Criminal Justice System more effective is to change our perspective from one focused on punishment to one which espouses a future oriented plan in which healing for both victim and violator is addressed in a holistic manner. This is the philosophy of Restorative Justice: helping the victim to come to terms with what has occurred and heal as much as possible from the damage done; encouraging the one who has done the harm to true accountability for his/her actions with appropriate restitution in whatever form; and including the community in finding this path forward.

I am much impressed with the restorative justice work of Danielle Sered at Common Justice in Brooklyn , NY, and highly recommend her book "Until We Reckon."

**However**, I definitely agree that providing the named support services ---- if actually delivered-- would promote the safety of the community and help those embroiled in the criminal system to find their footing to a more productive life.

*I have recently been learning about the work of the Criminal Justice Taskforce, headed up by Deborah Ramirez, at Northeastern University School of Law's Center for Law, Equity and Race (CLEAR).*

Massachusetts now has 18 Community Justice Support Centers throughout MA , funded by the Commonwealth, which can be accessed by anyone in the criminal system, whether in or out of prison/jail. **This is a viable model for us in Maine to provide court navigation.** There is also emphasis on training judges in restorative justice so that, with those judges, there can be a well-founded understanding of appropriate alternative options beyond the "usual" system --- i.e. looking for remedies , rather than punishment.

The whole project remains part of the traditional court system but offers more diversion possibilities. This could conceivably have a beneficial effect on the willingness of defense attorneys to serve, or even reduce the number of attorneys required for criminal cases.

I am happy to supply information about the MA undertaking, if requested.

Thank you.