

Testimony in Support of LD 1941: An Act to Implement Recommendations of the Commission to Examine Reestablishing Parole

Dear Members of the Maine Legislature,

My name is Santanu Basu, and I write to you to express my strong support for LD 1941, An Act to Implement Recommendations of the Commission to Examine Reestablish Parole. This bill is a public safety decision, not a moral absolution. It's about accountability and redemption without sacrificing public safety.

I have witnessed firsthand the profound impact of incarceration on individuals and families. In my personal lived experience, I have seen people who have committed serious crimes but have, over decades, transformed their lives through education, mentorship, and deep personal reflection. By implementing parole through a rigorous reviewing mechanism, this does not have to be about a moral conclusion it's about worthiness. **We, as a society, believe in second chances.** Yet, a lengthy sentence without parole denies individuals the very opportunity to demonstrate that they have changed. Studies show that people serving long sentences, particularly those who committed offenses in their youth, have some of the lowest recidivism rates. According to the Sentencing Project, the rate of reoffending for individuals released after decades in prison is less than 2%. This statistic alone challenges the notion that *de facto life* sentences enhance public safety.

Not a focal point, but beyond the human cost, there is an undeniable financial burden. Housing an aging prison population, many of whom pose no threat to society, drains taxpayer resources that could be better spent on education, mental health services, and rehabilitation programs. Several states have reformed their sentencing policies and concluded these reforms shift resources away from prolonged incarceration and toward broader public safety needs, a dynamic that can create institutional resistance.

Importantly, we must recognize that incarcerated individuals do not forget their actions, nor do they escape the burden of guilt and responsibility. Those who have taken a life or caused great harm live with the weight of their past every day and remain accountable for it. Many seek the opportunity to demonstrate, through sustained change, that they are more than their worst mistake. For some families of victims, healing may take different forms. While grief is lifelong and deeply personal, some find a way forward through acknowledgment of harm, expressions of genuine remorse, or reconciliation; while others may not, and that choice must be respected. Parole is not release. Review is not forgiveness. Mercy is not forgetting. Accountability continues even after growth.

I urge you to pass LD 1941 and give people a reason to rehabilitate, to hope, and to prove that they can contribute positively to society once again. Justice should not be about permanent condemnation but about accountability and the possibility of redemption. Very grateful for your time and consideration.

Respectfully yours,

Santanu Basu

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Warren
LD 1941

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