

Testimony in support of LD 1941

To the Judiciary Committee

January 8, 2026

Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn, and distinguished members of the Committee:

My name is Sarah Johnson. I am a resident of Sanford, have worked in manufacturing for 40 years, volunteered as an educator in the carceral system for 17 years, and served four years as a full-time prison educator in the Southwest.

I support LD 1941, An Act to Implement Recommendations of the Commission to Examine Reestablishing Parole, because of its profound human, family, community, and economic benefits. I have witnessed these benefits firsthand.

From 2018–2022, I worked in the education department of a women’s prison. Many of the women I worked with are still incarcerated, working every day to earn parole. Others, incarcerated for years to decades, have earned parole in the past three years and are thriving despite enormous challenges.

In the last few years most filed income taxes for the first time. They spend their paychecks locally, at thrift stores, farmers’ markets and small businesses rather than supporting the prison commissary complex. They buy diapers for grandchildren they can now hold, ice cream after a hard day, or groceries from a small store when a big-box environment is overwhelming.

These women are working as restaurant managers, IT technicians, certified peer support workers, insurance agents, office administrators, heavy equipment operators, water quality testers, media creators, health care outreach workers and diesel mechanics. They earned these jobs through years of disciplined work, education, and clear conduct, all completing certificates and associate degrees while working full time in kitchens, warehouses, maintenance crews and overnight shifts in a loud stressful, aggressive and chaotic environment that none of us could process. Some earned parole early because of their academic achievements.

Their wages are now fair and they have jobs that provide sick days to care for aging parents, flexibility to support families, and the dignity of meaningful work. I did not know these women at the time of their crimes. I worked with them in prison and I know them now, through their remorse, rehabilitation, integrity, and commitment to society. Knowing them has made me a better person.

Maine urgently needs a growing educated, dedicated workforce. This already exists within our prisons. I am saddened that some of the most outstanding women I know would still be incarcerated if they were in Maine.

I urge you to support parole and provide the men and women incarcerated in Maine the opportunity to earn rehabilitation, redemption, and to contribute to family and community through a parole system. I ask that you vote “Ought To Pass” on LD 1941.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sarah Johnson, Sanford ME