

Testimony in support of LD1941: An Act to Implement Recommendations of the Commission to Examine Reestablishing Parole

Good afternoon, Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn, and honorable members of the Judiciary Committee,

My name is Martinez, and I am here to testify in strong support of LD 1941.

I speak not only for myself but for countless men and women across Maine who have experienced profound transformation while incarcerated. I am living proof that even in the darkest places, change is possible—that God’s light can shine where many least expect it.

As a young adolescent, I became involved with the Department of Corrections due to criminal behavior and substance use. Growing up, drugs and crime surrounded me; they were not just temptations but part of the environment I was born into. Research shows that adolescents who begin using substances before age 15 are four to seven times more likely to develop a substance use disorder than those who start later. My own struggles began in early adolescence, compounded by underlying mental health challenges and generational predispositions.

Years of incarceration forced me to face myself. The hardest truth I learned was that my greatest obstacle was not the system, but me. Healing began when I recognized my problem and accepted that only a power greater than myself could guide me toward change. Through faith, I found the ability to love myself again, as God made me—perfectly imperfect.

Transformation did not come overnight. It came through struggle, discipline, and community. I became a member of the prison Resident Recovery Council, giving others the same chance at

hope that I had found. I trained as a recovery coach to walk alongside men in the earliest, most difficult stages of their journey. Step by step, barrier by barrier, I fought for my life.

Along the way, I embraced opportunities for growth, serving on the prison debate team against institutions like Harvard and Boston University, enrolling in community college programs, earning certifications in fields like IT, and continuing my education at the University of Maine to become a substance use counselor. Who better to guide others than someone who has lived it, survived it, and transformed because of it?

I could list accomplishments for hours, but the true testimony is this: prison did not destroy me—it reshaped me. It gave me the chance to address mental health struggles, understand addiction as a disease, and learn what it means to truly live. Today, I love who I am, not in arrogance, but in gratitude for the life God has allowed me to reclaim.

This is not just my story. Many men I know have spent decades behind bars, men who have completely changed from the individuals they once were. They are no longer defined by the crimes that placed them in prison. They are fathers, brothers, mentors, and spiritual leaders who, despite knowing they may never walk free, wake up every day thankful to be alive and committed to helping others. These men are not beyond redemption—they are living examples of it.

Maine must recognize this reality. Bringing back parole would not only save taxpayer dollars but would also restore families, heal communities, and give deserving men and women a second chance at life. I believe with all my heart that change is possible, and I ask you to see it too.

Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn, and honorable members of the committee, I urge you to support LD 1941. This bill would acknowledge the power of human transformation and honor the truth that people are more than their worst mistakes. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Diego Martinez