

Testimony in Support of LD 1941

Senator Carney, Representative Huhn, and Members of the Judiciary Committee:

My name is Gordon Perry (#30067), and I am writing in support of LD 1941.

I offer this testimony from a stark reality: I am serving a natural life sentence. I will spend the rest of my days behind bars regardless of whether parole is reestablished in Maine. My motive here is not my own freedom, it is my conscience fueled by empathy, compassion, and the practical logic of a man who has lived inside this system for nearly four decades if I am to count my childhood days as a ward of the state.

Turning 50 this past April, I have witnessed the evolution from the "old days" of warehousing, daily violence, and hopelessness; to the innovations of the Maine Model of Corrections (M.M.O.C.). The M.M.O.C. has effectively "cracked the code" in corrections with its humanizing philosophy which did not just manage me any longer; it inspired me. I found real hope enabling me a path to educate myself, find purpose, and my life passion to give back. Today I enjoy paying forward my gratitude for my opportunities for the rest of my days helping others impacted by the system.

But here is the hard sad truth: The M.D.O.C. is losing so much potential as it stands today. You cannot truly lead in corrections without parole. Parole is the engine of rehabilitation that offers the necessary hope and incentive for individuals to commit to the difficult work of change the M.M.O.C. offers; and without parole, the system is still broken or at best incomplete.

While the government has many powers it has failed to fix the systemic issues that lead people to prison, but you have the power to help fix the outcome. We cannot be true leaders in reform efforts or in corrections "which most believe we are" if we continue down the current path that does not include basic necessities like parole. The United States makes up less than 5% of the world's population, yet we hold nearly 20% of the world's prisoners. Sadly we incarcerate our citizens at a rate higher than any other developed democracy on earth. I urge you to pass LD 1941 to validate the human potential for redemption and ensure taxpayer money builds better neighbors, not just better prisoners.