

Betsy Williams  
Brunswick  
LD 1911

Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn and distinguished members of the Judiciary Committee. My name is Betsy Williams, I live in Brunswick and I am writing today in strong support of both LD 1911 and LD 1941. I am a proud member of the Maine Unitarian Universalist State Action network, which works tirelessly in defense of human dignity and our core religious commitment to center love in public policy.

By passing the bills before you today, you have an opportunity to use your legislative power in the best possible way—to restore human lives that have been temporarily torn apart by poor judgement and illegal behavior.

Who among us has not been granted a second chance in our lives? Maybe you were forgiven when you caused a friend pain, maybe you were able to apologize and make right something you damaged or a rule you disobeyed. For a moment, I ask you to remember the feeling you had when you accepted wrongdoing and learned you had a second chance. If you are like me, you felt deep gratitude to be given the opportunity to repair whatever relationship or community connection your behavior tore apart. And likely, with that opportunity, you were able to make that repair and not repeat the wrongdoing.

The 25% of all Mainers who have been convicted of minor crimes deserve the same opportunity to repair their lives after doing their time behind bars. Sealing records as provided in LD 1911 and re-instanting parole as provided in LD 1941 do not deny wrongdoing, they do not forget or absolve harm. But they do allow for repair and restoration of relationships, which in turn strengthen families and communities and reduce recidivism. What better goal could there be for our criminal justice system?

I urge you to consider the principles of restorative justice which assert that crime is a violation of people and of interpersonal relationships, that all violations create obligations, and that the central obligation is to repair the harms caused by the violation. As legislators you participate in meeting this obligation by creating an environment for re-entry that allows opportunity for repair. Please vote yes on LD 1911 and LD 1941.

Thank you.