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January 5, 2026

My name is Kella River and I am a licensed clinical social worker and licensed drug and alcohol counselor in private practice in Rockland, Maine. I am writing in support of LD 1941, Maine's Parole Bill. I provided mental health services at Maine State Prison from 2013 through 2018 and I currently offer mental health and substance abuse evaluations and treatment for formerly incarcerated individuals who are on probation in Knox and surrounding counties. I am familiar with the policies and practices of the Department of Corrections and have worked extensively with individuals who are currently and formerly incarcerated. In my history of providing support, I have had the opportunity to work with many individuals who utilized their time of incarceration to heal trauma, receive needed mental health care, acquire education, develop relationship and community skills and plan effectively for a positive future.

One of the major drawbacks to prison time for most is a sentence which relies on number of years to serve rather than actual progress made or readiness to re-enter the community. Allowing the return of a parole system in Maine would allow individuals a chance to re-enter the community as effective community members with built in supports when they are actually ready and not just when the sentence in years is complete. Using the current system creates a financial strain for the state and tax payers since many are incarcerated beyond the time that is actually needed to keep the community safe and additionally, creates more trauma and suffering for the incarcerated individual and their loved ones.

How much time is needed for an individual who has committed a crime to be rehabilitated? There is no magic number and assigning a number upon sentencing disregards human potential and reinforces a system that lacks efficacy, compassion and insight. I fully support the creation of a parole board in the State of Maine and a reinstatement of a system of parole that allows incarcerated individuals a chance to earn their way back to the community as measured by individual progress and assessed readiness.



Kella River, LCSW

Thomaston

LD 1941

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