

Mira Ptacin
Peaks Island
LD 1941

Testimony of Mira Ptacin in Support of LD 1941
Public Hearing, January 8
Maine State Legislature

Good morning Senator, Representative, and members of the committee.

My name is Mira Ptacin. I am a Maine-based journalist, author, educator, and for the past thirteen years, a volunteer teacher at the Maine Correctional Center, where I lead memoir writing workshops for incarcerated women. I am here to testify in strong support of LD 1941, Maine's parole bill.

I want to speak today about one woman I know well: Katrina Bridges.

On January 3, 2001, Katrina Bridges was nineteen years old. She had given birth just three months earlier. She stood barely over four feet tall. She was suffering from undiagnosed postpartum psychosis, layered onto a lifetime of trauma, poverty, and violence. That night, she killed her partner, Christopher Ingraham Jr., while he slept. Two days before her twenty-first birthday, Katrina was sentenced to forty-seven years in prison.

What I want to be clear about is this: I am not here to minimize harm or to rewrite history. A man died. A family lost a son. A child lost his father. That truth matters.

But so does this one: the Katrina Bridges who committed that act is not the Katrina Bridges I have known for over a decade. And Maine's current system gives us no meaningful way to account for that difference.

Katrina grew up in a working-class family in Downeast Maine, shaped by seasonal labor and scarcity. Her childhood was marked by violence and constant vigilance rather than safety. Animals, especially horses, became her refuge. By her teens she was working with them wherever she could, eventually leaving home to travel with a small rodeo. It was a brief window of freedom before pregnancy, isolation, and the crushing realities of young motherhood without support brought her back home.

When Katrina returned to rural Maine with a newborn, she had almost no access to postnatal or mental health care. Once routine checkups ended, so did oversight. She was isolated, impoverished, exhausted, and carrying unaddressed trauma. Food ran out. Diapers ran out. Hope ran thin. Her mind began to fracture. What followed was not a metaphorical unraveling but a psychotic break, untreated and unseen.

At her trial, no expert testified about postpartum psychosis. No meaningful examination was made of her mental illness, her history of abuse, or the intergenerational trauma borne by Indigenous women in this state. Her son was taken from her. And in the aftermath of 9/11, her case unfolded largely outside public attention. The sentence was final. There was no parole. There was no second look.

Inside prison, Katrina grew up.

I do not mean that romantically. Prison is not entirely redemptive. It is rigid, loud, and cold. Inside, Katrina learned how to survive, and learned the rules of a place designed to strip people of their complexity.

And yet, even there, she became someone else.

When I met Katrina thirteen years ago, she was in her thirties. She was tired. She was discouraged. And she was unmistakably alive intellectually. She has been in my classroom since the beginning. She reads voraciously, and writes with fiercely, with precision and depth. Her growth has not been dramatic or performative. It has been slow, rigorous, and sustained.

In twenty-four years of incarceration, Katrina has earned her GED, a veterinary technician certificate, and a college degree, graduating Phi Beta Kappa. She mentors other women. She gardens. She feeds birds that gather at her window. She has

lectured college students at both Colby and MIT from inside prison walls, with subjects ranging from The Philosophy of Love and Stoicism, to computer coding classes. She has built a life of discipline, reflection, and contribution in a place that offers very little room for any of those things.

This matters.

LD 1941 does not guarantee release. It does not erase accountability. It does not reopen wounds casually. What it does is offer the possibility of review. It allows the state to ask a necessary, humane question: Who is this person now? If a person can grow, change, educate herself, and contribute profoundly to society—even from behind bars—what, exactly, are we protecting society from by keeping her locked away? What happens when rehabilitation has already occurred, but the cell door stays shut?

Maine has been a non-parole state since 1976. That rigidity means we currently treat every sentence as if human beings are static, as if growth, education, remorse, and rehabilitation are irrelevant once a door closes. That belief is not only morally questionable; it is empirically false.

Katrina Bridges is not a risk to public safety. She is a deeply accountable, deeply reflective woman who has already done the work we claim incarceration is meant to produce. Continued confinement does not protect society from her. It only prevents society from benefiting from who she has become.

LD 1941 gives Maine the chance to align its justice system with reality. People change. Some change profoundly. When they do, justice should be capable of noticing.

I urge you to support LD 1941. Not just for Katrina, but for every long-term incarcerated person who has earned the right to be seen again as a human being in motion, not a moment frozen in time.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

-Mira Ptacin