

January 6, 2026

Dear Senator Beebe-Center, members of the Criminal Justice/Public Safety committee and distinguished members of our Maine Legislature:

My name is Cassandra Walters and I reside in Rockland. I am writing in favor of LD 1941, An Act to Implement Recommendations of the Commission to Examine Reestablishing Parole.

I have lived in Maine for thirteen plus years and in that time, I have appreciated the feeling of community here and the way neighbors assist neighbors and the way those that have more, find ways to share themselves and their resources to those who have need. I have considered this to be a unique aspect to the state of Maine so I was surprised to learn that there is no possibility of parole for the Maine residents who have been incarcerated in the prison system here. I know that, 40 years ago, Maine was the first state to eliminate the parole system in the US, as part of a "truth in sentencing" movement that actually created a trend away from rehabilitation in favor of more punitive measures. I think after 40 years we may be able to honestly recognize that the result of this is to overburden our correctional system by creating a huge incarcerated population and the accompanying skyrocketing cost to each Maine taxpayer without effectively reducing recidivism.

Couldn't our State lead the way instead by assisting these people to recover, discover a different way of living life and dealing with the experiences that life brings? Couldn't Maine instead choose to put more resources into the difficult return to becoming a contributing, accepted member of our communities. Isn't that what a "correctional" system should do? Can we use some of those financial resources currently used to keep people incarcerated for long periods of time to instead assist people that end up in prison to understand how and why and assist them to finding their way to make a "correction"? We are living in a time when we need collaboration and input from everyone to solve the complex problems we are facing in our society, in new and unique ways.

I'm asking you to re-instate parole into our correctional system here in the state of Maine so that each individual has the hope of the possibility of making a correction and becoming a part of our communities in a positive way, whether big or small, it makes a difference. Every human being errors, sometimes intentionally, sometimes ignorantly and sometimes by mistake. Some get caught and some don't, but everyone deserves a chance to amend the wrong. Becoming incarcerated in Maine could be a positive life changing experience.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,
Cassandra Walters