

Honorable Members of the Judiciary Committee, Representatives Miliken, Mathieson, Pluecker, Sargent, Sayre, Sinclair, Warren, Senators Beebe-Center and Talbot Ross,

My name is Richard Stahursky. I'm writing you in support of bringing back parole in Maine with LD 1941. This bill would give me hope which is something invaluable. The hope to go home to my fiancée, the hope to have a family and rebuild my life up. I was given a life sentence for murder in Maine and in 2016 I was transferred from Maine to New Jersey.

I've been in solitary confinement now for almost 20 years with bouts in general population. Solitary confinement has greatly affected my mental health. I have attempted suicide multiple times and I have a history of self-harm. In 2021 I met my fiancée Arimela, who has shown me that I could be more than what society has labeled me. Before meeting her, I had no reason to stay out of trouble because shortly after coming to prison in 2002 on another charge my only sister died, my mother died and my two sons back then were kept from me. I felt like the world crumbled under my feet. I grew up in an extremely abusive household with my stepfather being a pedophile who sexually assaulted my sister for years. I've never heard my mother tell me she loved me.

I didn't have the guidance that I needed back then to become the man I am now. I left the abusive household at 11 years old, I was homeless for periods at a time. I tried to survive on the streets but it was brutal. I had two sons out of wedlock by the time I was 20 which in hindsight it affected their lives because I wasn't able to give them the stability they needed.

For the past 4 years and a half I have been trying to get into college to better myself. I obtained my High School Equivalency Diploma at the Maine State Prison. Parole would give me an opportunity to right some of my wrongs, to give back to the community and to finally be a provider for my fiancée and our future family.

Currently, I'm not being given the tools to show that I have potential to be a changed man. When I look at myself in the mirror, I see a man who is eager to prove his worth but who is constantly met with obstacles along the path. I don't want to be defined by my charges. Maine abolished the death penalty but in reality it still exists under the form of a life sentence. A life sentence is death by incarceration. Unconditional love and hope are the most important aspects for me, they keep me going everyday.

For these reasons I ask you to please vote Yes on parole.

Respectfully,
Richard Stahursky