



January 6, 2026

Members of the Judiciary Committee,

I am writing to advocate for **LD 1941**, to reestablish parole in Maine, allowing for the structured release of incarcerated people who demonstrate unequivocal remorse and responsibility and personify characteristics of reformation and rehabilitation.

My name is Ashley Oettinger, and I am a resident of Kennebunkport in York County. I am a licensed social worker and mitigation specialist. Through mitigation we uncover the reasons behind why a person might have committed a crime. This work is human-focused investigation with a goal to share this story with the Court. These reports are built on facts, social science research, and evidence-based practices, but also humanize the accused by connecting those facts to their legal matter instead of presenting them in a vacuum. As it stands, a mitigation report is one of the only resources a defendant has to advocate for leniency. Parole eligibility would grant additional opportunities for review, post-conviction.

The Maine Model of Corrections was established (2022) to focus on humanizing the correctional experience, fostering collaboration between staff and residents, and preparing individuals for successful reentry into society. Those facing long or life sentences engage in this system, doing the work to heal themselves despite prolonged reintegration back to their community, or no possibility of returning at all. While punitive consequences remain predominant at sentencing, healing and rehabilitation are the factors that promote long-lasting change and lower recidivism—making our communities safer. Well-respected research contradicts our current methods and the lack of access to parole.

It is my belief that many incarcerated people have outgrown their correctional environment and there is no benefit to remaining in custody other than strictly punitive reasoning. The Supervised Community Confinement Program (SCCP) is nearly impossible to achieve, especially for someone with a Class A felony, based on my own experiences navigating the process with former clients. The SCCP program is certainly not a feasible replacement for parole.

Adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) are directly connected to criminality and when we shift our focus to heal these deep-seated wounds we can change the trajectory of a person's life and how they show up within their community. Restoring parole, restores hope—cracking open a once tightly shut door inviting those willing to transform to walk through it.

Respectfully Submitted,

Ashley Oettinger, LMSW