



Written Testimony of Bryan Widenhouse
State Legislative Affairs Manager, FAMM
Maine Joint Committee on Judiciary
In Support of LD 1941
January 6, 2026

Dear Chair Carney, Chair Kuhn, and members of the Joint Committee on Judiciary,

Thank you for the opportunity to support **LD 1941**, which would reestablish a discretionary parole system in Maine. I write on behalf of **FAMM**, a national nonpartisan, nonprofit organization that advocates sentencing and prison policies that are individualized and fair, protect public safety, and preserve families. We unite current and formerly incarcerated people, their families and loved ones, and a diverse network of concerned citizens working to improve our system of justice. FAMM supports **LD 1941** and asks you to please vote “yes” on this legislation.

As a key component of our Second Chances Agenda, FAMM supports legislatures across the country in creating more pathways for sentences to be reviewed and modified through “second look” mechanisms. After nearly five decades without parole, emerging correctional policies and data indicate that reestablishing discretionary parole in Maine can enhance public safety, reduce recidivism, and reduce fiscal pressures associated with a growing and rapidly aging prison population. We are pleased to see this Committee consider **LD 1941**.

The justice system continually learns and evolves through lessons from history and research. With a well-established consensus on the importance of successful, post-incarceration reentry, lawmakers are better equipped to move the criminal justice system to be more effective and less costly. Please consider the body of research and data that has emerged in nearly a half century since Maine abolished discretionary parole.

- Evaluation of Maine’s abolition of discretionary parole found that incarceration increased without meaningful reduction in crime. The absence of parole did not substantially improve public safety, and people began serving longer prison sentences without a strong incentive to rehabilitate.¹
- Larger academic study suggests parole systems produce lower recidivism through effective risk assessment and incentivized participation in rehabilitative programming.²

¹ National Institute of Justice: <https://nij.ojp.gov/library/publications/maine-rejects-indeterminacy-case-study-flat-sentencing-and-parole-abolition>

² How Should Inmates be Released from Prison? An Assessment of Parole vs Fixed-Sentence Regimes: <chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/> https://kuziemko.scholar.princeton.edu/sites/g/files/toruaf3996/f/files/kuziemko/files/inmates_release.pdf



- Emerging national guidance for parole and community supervision best practices have increased effectiveness of discretionary parole mechanisms to reduce the cost of mass incarceration while maintaining public safety.³
- In addition to fiscal savings from reducing the incarceration population, Maine would realize significant economic boost through the increase of the workforce.⁴

LD 1941 is rooted in fifty years of advancement of research, public safety, fiscal responsibility, and best practices in corrections and rehabilitative programming. The legislation incorporates strong victim rights provisions. This bill balances public safety with restorative justice principles, ensuring the system is both accountable and respectful. This well-designed parole system incentivizes rehabilitation, enhances successful reentry, and reduces taxpayer expense while maintaining public safety. For these reasons, I respectfully urge the members of the Committee on Judiciary to vote Ought to Pass on LD 1941.

Respectfully,

/s Bryan Widenhouse
Bryan Widenhouse
State Legislative Affairs Manager

³ Putting Public Safety First: 13 Parole Supervision Strategies To Enhance Reentry Outcomes:
<https://www.ojp.gov/library/publications/putting-public-safety-first-13-parole-supervision-strategies-enhance-reentry>

⁴ Rethinking Parole in Maine, Colby Laboratory for Economic Studies:
<https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/43edf1b083f345ce888b115e99ad3596>