

Kelly Merrill
Maine Green Independent Party
LD 1941

Date: 8 January 2026 via Zoom
Re: Maine Green Independent Party LD 1941 Parole OTP

Good afternoon, Chairs Sen. Carney, Rep. Kuhn and distinguished Members of the Joint Standing Committee on the Judiciary. Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of LD 1941, “An Act to Implement Recommendations of the Commission to Examine Reestablishing Parole.”

It has been nearly 50 years since Maine became the first state to abolish parole. But since then, our society hasn’t become safer. Since then, the prison population has grown significantly, and is more than 3 times larger than it was in 1976. Who benefits from continuing to incarcerate people who have demonstrated reform?

This bill would allow people to become eligible for parole after they have served one third of their time. It would liberate people to return to their families, who are also disaffected. It would free people to return to society, and live a life outside of prison that might benefit us all.

I know many formerly incarcerated people. They are some of the most inspiring people I know. Highly motivated. Transformed. And powerfully beneficial to society; servants to the people. That is not just my experience with formerly incarcerated people; I think that truth is evident from the testimony presented today.

This is a measure of restorative justice. It is a measure of racial justice. And such transitional programs make us significantly safer.

Economically, this measure would increase Maine’s economy by \$14.7M per 100 paroled workers. Maine pays \$78K per incarcerated person per year. I wonder, what was the original intent of the law? And couldn’t we all benefit from more resources?

Prison is a place where people are punished. Not restoring parole guarantees that it is a place where people are thrown away. It doesn’t allow discernment in assessing an imprisoned person’s growth or the *way* they have served their time.

Hope, rehabilitation, redemption, and healing are what we all need. People who have been imprisoned are also deserving of that opportunity. They are deserving of that dignity.

We respectfully urge this committee to vote LD 1941 OTP and join the 46 other states that have some form of parole.

Respectfully submitted,
Kelly F. Merrill
Co-Chair, Maine Green Independent Party