



1/8/2026

Testimony for the Maine Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety

RE: LD 1941 – An Act to Implement Recommendations of the Commission to Examine Reestablishing Parole

Greetings Co-Chair Carney, Co-Chair Kuhn, and Esteemed Members of the Judiciary Committee,

My name is Dr. Brashani Reece. I hold a PsyD in Forensic Psychology, specializing in emerging adults ages 18-25. I am also the Executive Director of Drop LWOP New England and, most importantly for this discussion, I am a survivor of attempted murder and a certified restorative justice facilitator.

I am here to urge you to support the reestablishment of parole in Maine.

I wanted two things following the incident that almost took my life: (1) Accountability and (2) Rehabilitation - because true accountability requires a person to change, so that the cycle of violence stops. Mechanisms like parole are truly a part of the incentive structure for rehabilitation.

I know that rehabilitation is possible for all people. But my education confirms the knowledge that this is especially true of people under the age of 25 at the time of the crime.

In conversations like these, we often hear that "the brain isn't finished until 25." But I want to move past the cliché. The most vital fact about the human brain isn't that it is unfinished at 19; it's that it is miraculously plastic. It is designed to learn, to adapt, and to develop the capacity for impulse regulation and empathy where they once didn't exist.

In forensic psychology, we distinguish between "Cold Cognition" - decisions made in a vacuum - and "Hot Cognition," decisions under high stress or emotional arousal. For the emerging adult, the "gas pedal" of the brain is fully floored, but the "brakes" are still being installed. During "hot" cognition moments, their ability to regulate impulses is biologically compromised.

However, as individuals move into their 30s and 40s, they undergo a neurological transformation. Their ability to "cool" their own cognition increases. They literally become different people, neurologically and behaviorally. We here today have all gone through this process.

But for this transformation to matter, there must be hope.

Hope is not a sentiment; it is a clinical prerequisite for change. When we tell someone that they have "nothing left to lose," not only are we being cruel, but we are creating a dangerous environment inside our correctional facilities. Without the incentive of a parole hearing, there are few reasons to engage in the grueling work of rehabilitation.

Parole is the mechanism that honors the science of change.

By denying the possibility of parole, we miss the opportunities to take full advantage of a young person's ability to change - the very thing that survivors like me ask for: to break the cycle of violence.

I ask you to listen to the science of what is possible, recognize that hope is a tool for accomplishing important goals of rehabilitation, and vote "Ought to Pass."

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

, PsyD

Dr. Brashani Reece
Executive Director