

Good Afternoon Senators and Respected Members of the Committee,

My name is Crystal Love. I am a NARM-Trauma Educator, Integrative Health Coach, and Recovery-Oriented Systems Practitioner with experience across behavioral health, child welfare, education, and justice-involved settings. I am here in strong support of LD1923 and the repurposing of the [Long Creek Youth Development Center](#) into a community-based system of prevention, stabilization, and youth development.

LD1923 is fundamentally a community safety and youth development bill. It asks a practical question: What actually helps young people become healthy, accountable adults—and what protects communities over the long term? Decades of evidence show that confinement-based youth systems do not deliver those outcomes. Prevention- and community-based systems do.

Youth do not enter systems because they are “bad.” They enter because of unmet needs—trauma exposure, mental-health challenges, substance use, housing instability, family disruption, school disengagement, and lack of access to coordinated care. When these needs are addressed early and effectively, risk decreases and communities become safer.

LD1923 does not eliminate accountability—it makes accountability effective. Real accountability requires skills: emotional regulation, impulse control, communication, problem-solving, and the ability to repair harm. These capacities are learned. Systems centered on confinement often interrupt development; systems centered on support build it.

In my professional work, I design and implement prevention-oriented, trauma-informed programs that build these skills in real-world settings. My approach integrates evidence-based, body-centered practices informed by the Kripalu Center for Yoga & Health, frameworks associated with Harvard Medical School which show that trauma affects the nervous system, decision-making, and behavior. Effective youth development must address both behavior and the underlying capacity to self-regulate and engage.

One example of how this is operationalized is through relational trauma frameworks such as the NeuroAffective Relational Model (NARM), which is used widely in trauma treatment. NARM focuses not on repeatedly revisiting past events, but on understanding the survival patterns young people developed to stay safe—often patterns of disconnection from their bodies, emotions, and relationships. This matters for youth systems because many justice-involved behaviors are expressions of these survival strategies. By helping young people build curiosity, regulation, and the capacity for reconnection, this approach supports responsibility, engagement, and change without retraumatization.

This is where restorative justice and youth development intersect. Restorative approaches are not about avoiding responsibility; they are about learning responsibility in context. When paired with trauma-informed and relational practices, restorative accountability helps youth understand the impact of their actions, repair harm, and remain connected to family, school, and community—key protective factors against future harm.

From an implementation standpoint, LD1923 supports a coordinated continuum of care, not a single program. Practically, this includes:

- Prevention and early intervention in schools and communities
- Non-carceral crisis response and stabilization
- Integrated behavioral health and substance-use services
- Restorative accountability that builds skills rather than shame
- Culturally responsive, community-led providers
- Continuity of care that follows youth through transitions

This approach strengthens communities by reducing repeated system involvement, supporting families, improving school engagement and workforce readiness, and lowering long-term public costs tied to incarceration and emergency services.

Opposition to LD1923 often centers on fear of change or misconceptions that community-based care is “soft.” The evidence shows the opposite: continuing to invest in systems that do not work is what weakens communities.

LD1923 is a strategic investment in Maine’s youth, families, and long-term safety. It aligns youth development with community wellbeing and replaces ineffective responses with solutions that build capacity, responsibility, and resilience.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

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