

Swathi Sivasubramanian
South Portland
LD 1923

January 12th, 2026

TO: The Joint Standing Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety

RE: Testimony In Support of LD 1923: An Act to Repurpose Long Creek Youth Development Center and Build a Community System of Support.

Dear Senator Beebe-Center, Representative Hasenfus, and members of the Criminal Justice and Public Safety Committee,

My name is Swathi Sivasubramanian, and I am a mother, educator and resident of South Portland, Maine. I am speaking today in support of LD 1923: An Act to Repurpose Long Creek Youth Development Center and Build a Community System of Support.

I care deeply about this bill on several levels: as a resident of South Portland invested in the future of the city and its youth, as an educator who has worked with youth ages 13 and up including youth who have experienced incarceration at Long Creek, and as a loving family member of several young people in recovery.

As a South Portland resident, I know that community spaces and resources are a consistent need in the city. I want to see the facilities and space available at Long Creek Youth Development Center used effectively to facilitate the rehabilitation, healing and successful reintegration of young people in Maine, and I support efforts to transform the building into a residential treatment facility.

I have nearly a decade of experience working with young people, first as a middle school educator and now as a facilitator of youth leadership and advocacy. Through these experiences, I have witnessed the incredible power of expectations and narrative on young people's actions and trajectories. Young people who are consistently told, through words and actions of scaffolded support, that they can succeed and be meaningful contributors within their communities are able to picture positive futures for themselves and take steps towards this. While youth who are labeled "bad," begin to enact these labels as the main path of behavior and self-conception that has been laid out for them. A positive, loving, and therapeutic environment (as laid out as the goal of this bill), as opposed to a punitive or carceral one, would best support young people to live into the thriving and contributing adults everyone can be.

Through my professional and personal experiences loving and supporting young people navigating intersections of mental health challenges, substance use disorder, and poverty, I know that community-based solutions are often the most supportive and healing, both for individual young people and for the communities they are from and will return to. I am especially supportive of the plan this bill lays out to partner with community organizations and invest in community-based services.

With this, I urge you to consider the changes proposed in this bill to help create a more positive, supportive space for these young people. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Swathi Sivasubramanian
South Portland, ME