

January 12th, 2026

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

RE: Testimony Neither For Nor Against 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 esteemed members of the Criminal Justice and Public Safety Committee,

Good afternoon. My name is Frankie Bachelder.

I'm here today because I lived inside Long Creek, not once, but five times, between the ages of fourteen and sixteen.

I want to be clear about something from the start. I'm not here to pretend I didn't make mistakes. I did. Accountability matters.

But what also matters is whether a system is actually built to help young people change, or whether it just punishes them until they come back.

Because that's exactly what happened to me.

Each time I was released from Long Creek, there was no real treatment plan, no meaningful re-entry support, and no follow up care. I was sent home and expected to do better, with the same trauma, the same addiction issues, and the same lack of support I had before.

Within days, sometimes the very first day, I was back on the same path that led me there in the first place.

That isn't rehabilitation. That's a revolving door.

One of the most damaging experiences I had was being placed in SMU. During my time there, I had no shirt for the duration of my stay until staff had to make me presentable for a Zoom court hearing. I was denied phone calls. I was denied showers. I was isolated instead of supported.

I share that not for shock value, but because isolation and deprivation do not treat trauma, addiction, or mental health. They deepen it.

I didn't "age out" of Long Creek. The last time I was there, I was 16. What actually changed my life came later, when I finally received treatment and support outside of the juvenile justice system. That's when I stopped coming back. That tells me something important, the problem

wasn't that I was incapable of change. The problem was that Long Creek wasn't designed to help me change.

This bill matters because it recognizes that youth incarceration should not function like a prison. Young people need mental health care, substance use treatment, education, and real reentry planning. They need staff trained to stabilize and guide them, not break them down.

I'm standing here today employed, sober, involved in my community, and working with youth organizations because someone finally invested in my rehabilitation. I am living proof that when we focus on treatment instead of punishment, lives change.

Repurposing Long Creek is not about being soft on crime. It's about being smart, humane, and effective.

I urge you to support this bill, so the next 14 year old who walks through those doors has a real chance to come out better than they went in.

Thank you for listening.

Frankie Bachelder