



Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety

**Testimony of Mary L. Bonauto for GLBTQ Legal Advocates & Defenders (GLAD Law)
In Support of the Amendment to LD 1923, *An Act to Repurpose Long Creek Youth
Development Center and Build a Community System of Support***

January 12, 2026

Senator Beebe-Center, Representative Hasenfus, and Honorable Members of this Committee,

GLBTQ Legal Advocates & Defenders (GLAD Law) is a nonprofit legal organization that works in Maine, New England, and nationally to create a just society free of discrimination based on transgender status and gender identity and expression, HIV status, and sexual orientation. Along with myself, two other of our attorneys reside in Maine.

GLAD Law appreciates the efforts of Representative Brennan and his leadership along with that of directly affected people, advocates, service providers, and experts and responsible officials in and out of government, in advocating for young people and all people to have access to necessary and appropriate mental and behavioral health care.

The provision requiring monthly updating on the youth at Long Creek in section 2 of the original bill is part of good governance and public transparency, particularly where we are talking about the confinement of minors and others under age 21.

GLAD Law supports the amendment circulated last Friday focused solely on creating a working group. Among other things, GLAD Law respectfully suggests that the working group consider what other data and information should be publicly available about minors and others under age 21 in the custody or under the supervision of the Department of Corrections.

We hope that a future working group will assess what services are encompassed within “community-based services” and how to ensure that local communities—both geographically and as otherwise identifiable—have a seat at the table and can advocate the services they most need beyond legally mandated services.

Maine already has positive experiences in leveraging local communities directly as part of the solution for youth and communities. The Place Matters reports, rigorously researched and produced by the Catherine Cutler Institute at the University of Southern Maine, have demonstrated as much through its multi-year study of Regional Care Teams to bring individualized, community-based resources to support youth and keep them in community when possible. The Institute’s reports on Regional Care Teams demonstrate that local efforts, and not only the one size fits all required services, are a necessary part of the equation. *See Place*

Matters, *Research & Resources: Report Series*, <https://placemattersmaine.org/research-resources/> (last visited Jan. 12, 2026).

We hope there will be a provision for robust public participation and comment in any working group, including about the future of Long Creek Youth Development Center. We thank the Committee for its time and consideration.

Sincerely,

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