

Testimony of Jonathan Brown
Maine Service Employees Association, SEIU Local 1989
Before the Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety
1:00 pm Monday, January 12, 2026,
State House, Room 436 and Electronically

**Neither for nor Against LD 1923: An Act to Repurpose Long Creek Youth Development Center
and Build a Community System of Support**

Senator Beebe-Center, Representative Hasenfus, members of the Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety, I am Jonathan Brown, Lead Member Political & Legislative Coordinator for the Maine Service Employees Association, Local 1989 of the Service Employees International Union. The Maine Service Employees Association is a labor union that represents over 13,000 workers across the state, including state workers at the Department of Corrections and the Department of Health and Human Services.

We are here to testify neither for nor against LD 1923. We represent security personnel, educators, psychiatric social workers and other frontline staff at Long Creek Youth Development Center. These workers are deeply dedicated to providing the highest level of support to the residents at Long Creek in their delivery of educational and restorative justice programs. We support the intent of this bill to provide more services for housing, behavioral health, education, substance use disorder prevention and treatment, wraparound case management and other services outlined in this bill to better support residents on their path to exit the juvenile justice system and reduce their rate of re-entry in the criminal justice system as adults. Our members at Long Creek are already tasked with many of the objectives outlined in LD 1923 and have long supported strengthening and increasing services and opportunities for the residents. Our members are encouraged to see the Legislature working to provide further investment, and an improved partnership with DHHS to carry out this work to improve public safety and the well-being of Maine's incarcerated youth.

We highly recommend this committee make an amendment to **Section 5. [the] Long Creek Youth Development Center working group**, by adding two MSEA worker representatives to participate in the planning process for any repurposing of the center: one from education, one from security. Appointing two representatives would ensure that the breadth and diversity of our members' expertise in educational, behavioral health and safety practices, along with their knowledge of existing gaps, will best inform the development of recommendations. Our members possess ongoing first-hand, in-depth knowledge of this institution and the ever-changing environment of the resident population.

With frontline staff regularly participating in this working group, they would provide constructive insights about how the center currently operates. Their contributions would best inform and address unmet needs for the residents with whom they work on a daily basis. Their inclusion would reduce unintended oversights in the planning process, allowing for a more thorough and efficient rollout of this plan. We must note that we do have questions about how this bill may shift the Department of Corrections' oversight of Long Creek, and estimated population growth that the center might experience if LD 1923 should become law.

We believe the intent of LD 1923 would better position Maine's juvenile justice system to meet their duties in accordance with state and federal laws as well as correctional standards, and to fulfill the administration's commitment to the Maine Model of Corrections, but frontline workers must be statutorily included in this planning process. The workers, some of whom have spent more time working at Long Creek than they do at home, are an essential part of the formula for success in developing programs to better rehabilitate the youth held at the center.

Thank you and I'd be happy to answer any questions.