



Pinny Beebe-Center
Senator, District 12

THE MAINE SENATE
131st Legislature

3 State House Station
Augusta, Maine 04333

Testimony of Senator Pinny Beebe-Center introducing LD 178, "An Act to Support Reentry and Reintegration into the Community"

Before the Joint Standing Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety

March 13, 2023

Good morning, Representative Salisbury and Distinguished Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety. I am Senator Pinny Beebe-Center, and I represent all of Knox County, except for Isle Au Haut and the town of Washington. I am here today to present LD 178, "An Act to Support Reentry and Reintegration into the Community."

This legislation seeks to create a supportive, restorative, and victim-sensitive parole system here in Maine. This will have multiple different facets that work together to create a strong parole program. This includes creating a seven-person parole board of professionals from diverse fields of expertise. This legislation will open an equitable avenue of responsible reentry that supports people returning to their communities from incarceration, providing that those who have been harmed are properly supported and that emphasis is put on community safety. This legislation will honor the judgement of courts and judges by keeping returning community members under Maine Department of Corrections (MDOC) supervision for the duration of their prison sentence. It will also partially rectify errors of the 1975 Criminal Code reform that abolished parole and expanded prison sentences.

Additionally, this legislation will provide universal eligibility of incarcerated community members to apply for parole only after serving one-third of the unsuspended portion of their sentence, and imbue the parole board with the discretion to deny that parole if the board determines that granting parole would be detrimental to society. LD 178 will support MDOC and community-based restorative justice organizations in their expanding implementation of Victim/Offender dialogue, supporting victims and survivors as they work to heal. Finally, this legislation creates a requirement of oversight and data collection for public transparency, which can help address racial disparities in sentencing and incarceration, a growing concern in Maine.



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So, this legislation aims to accomplish many goals in establishing parole, but I can't overstate the importance of why this is needed. The goal we hope for any incarcerated person is to be rehabilitated so that they can successfully rejoin their communities and families. We have all of these incarcerated people who have had all sorts of challenges in their lives, and when we pair those challenges with desperate situations, some people felt they had no other place to turn to than crime. There are all sorts of reasons why people commit crimes, but one of the larger causes is addiction. We know that folks can recover from addiction with the right tools and support. Maine is held as a national example, and it's time for us to continue to lead for other states to follow. People are willing to put in the work to help make their communities a better place, and help better contribute to society. All we need to do is give them a chance to do so. This gives us the opportunity to grow our workforce, reconnect families, and give a chance of a new start to many who are deserving.

I thank you for your time and consideration. While I welcome the committee to ask questions, I would also like as much time as possible to go to all the folks who have come out today to give their testimony, so that they all have their chance to speak. Thank you.