

**Testimony Submitted to Maine Legislature, Criminal Justice and Public
Safety Committee, on
LD 178, "An Act to Support Reentry and Reintegration into the
Community"**

Good morning,

**Senator Beebe-Center, Representative Salisbury, and members of the
Criminal Justice and Public Safety Committee**

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of LD 178. I am Dr. Arthur Jones of Belfast. I am a retired Criminal Justice Professor. I am currently a volunteer with the **Restorative Justice Project Maine** Legislative Committee and a member of the **Parole 4 Maine** citizen group. I am also on the **Board of Visitors** for Waldo and Knox County jails. I served on the **Parole Study Commission** and voted to reinstate parole in Maine

My background includes a Ph.D. in criminal justice studies from the Union Institute University, Cincinnati, Ohio. I worked for 30 years in the criminal justice field as a practitioner and held numerous executive-level positions. I was appointed by the Governor and served on the State Parole Board for twenty years in two different states, New Jersey and Rhode Island. I retired from public service in 2001 and became a full-time Criminal Justice Professor. My experience and expertise in the area of Corrections and Parole qualify me to make a strong recommendation on this bill.

**•LD 178 is based on the key findings and recommendations of the Parole Study
Commissions' Report to: Reestablish parole in Maine.**

- Parole Establishes Incentives for Rehabilitation and Improves Re-entry**
- Parole is the best transition back into the community. The process promotes rehabilitation and provides opportunities to continue in the community
- Parole means fewer people are damaged by the long-term effects of imprisonment.
- Parole Improves Public Safety**
- Parole mandates supervision following release to the community
- Parole would not be granted to anyone who represents a risk to the community:
All parolees must have a positive psychological and low-risk assessment.
- Most victims /victim advocates support parole.**
- They prefer treatment over extended sentences

- They prefer release on parole supervision as opposed to maxing out with no supervision
- **Parole Saves Money and Boosts The Economy**
 - It is 9 times more expensive to incarcerate someone than to supervise them on parole
 - Experts estimate a \$ 14.7Million boost to Maine's economy for every 100 people granted parole.
- **The majority of states offer the possibility of parole. Only a small number of states have abolished or severely curtailed discretionary parole.**
 - Most of those states who abolished parole, including Maine and the federal government have instituted some form of community release program.
 - Most Supervised Community Release programs, including the (Maine SCCP) will not have any effect on long-term sentences and therefore should not be an alternative to parole.
- **Empirical research documents lower recidivism rates among parolees compared with offenders released on probation and those who complete their sentences without supervision.¹ Examples of empirical studies.**
- **In my experience, the prospect of parole provides a strong incentive for inmates to :**
 - avoid disciplinary problems, and enroll in rehabilitative and educational programs designed to prevent crime and reduce recidivism.
 - This increases public safety, especially among inmates whose risk factors are correlated with high recidivism rates (e.g., inmates with chronic and persistent substance use and mental health challenges, inmates with poor employment records, and inmates who consistently engage in what researchers and mental health practitioners refer to as "criminal thinking).
- Parole caseloads are generally smaller than probation caseloads, which increases the quality of supervision and contributes to public safety.
- There is overwhelming empirical evidence that parole supervision is significantly less expensive than incarceration.

¹ Some studies have yielded different results.

I conclude by strongly recommending the passage of LD 178.

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