

Good Morning, and thank you Senator Beebe-Center, Representative Salisbury, and members of the Criminal Justice and Public Safety Committee, for the opportunity to speak before you on a bill that I am very passionate about seeing passed: LD 178, an Act to Support Reentry and Reintegration into the Community.

My name is Kelly Taylor, and I live in South Thomaston. I am a Social Studies teacher in Rockland and have been over 40 years having taught all subject areas in grades 7-12. So today, I want to speak to you from the point of view of a teacher whose students write Legislative Documents and hold committee hearings, and debate the pros and cons of their bills. And I ask: what makes a good bill?

In the words of former President Obama: "A good compromise, a good piece of legislation, is like a good sentence. Or a good piece of music. Everybody can recognize it. They say, 'Huh. It works. It makes sense.'"

Reestablishing Parole in Maine DOES make sense! In a government system where both the Preambles to the U.S. and Maine Constitution list as a primary goal of government to "establish Justice" not having an active Parole board does not make sense. A Parole Board is a check and balance against injustice and against one branch of government, i.e., the executive branch having too much absolute power over such matters as reprieves, commutations, and pardons. A Parole Board would allow more voices to be heard, especially those voices who are the incarcerated members of our society and who want to do the right things.

Twenty years ago a bright young 12 year old stepped foot in my classroom and we quickly bonded because he knew I cared. Now that resident of MSP has completed his Master's Degree in Conflict Resolution and Analysis and has just been accepted into the Doctorate program at George Mason University. He writes a monthly column for the Bollard magazine, is a co-host on Justice Radio, is a visiting instructor at Colby College, and is a renowned Restorative Justice practitioner among many other things. This young man deserves Hope and a second chance to utilize his many skills and to repay his debt to society.

In today's world of Restorative Justice practices, incarcerated men and women are looking for ways that they can be restored, rehabilitated, and are eager to exercise what they have learned. Over the last 7 years, I have been a frequent visitor to events at the MSP. I have seen how many men are actively involved in making the

world they live in a better place through access to higher education, through Hospice volunteering, and through sharing their hopes and dreams for the future.

In all of these visits, and in all of my day-to-day communications, I am truly inspired by these men and women who do not want to be remembered for the worst decision of their lives, but by how they can and are changed when given the opportunity and with hope, care, and love. We must restore humanity to the justice system, and LD 178 is a huge step in the right direction for Criminal Justice Reform. Parole would restore hope, not just to my former student and dear friend, but to the many incarcerated men and women who strive to be their best selves and to make Maine a better and safer place to live.

In the words of Governor Mills in her 2<sup>nd</sup> Inaugural address, "I can report to you that, across this Maine, hope is very much alive...Indeed, there is hope for the future, and this is important because it is all we have really." I truly hope that Gov. Mills believes in these words, because LD 178 would give Maine's incarcerated men and women hope for the future when parole is restored to Maine.

Therefore, I strongly urge members of this committee that LD 178 Ought to Pass and a Parole Board should be reestablished in the State of Maine. Thank you for all you do and for your support.