



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

My name is Wendy Allen, I am the Young Adult Diversion Program Lead, and Policy and Advocacy Lead for Restorative Justice Institute of Maine. I am also system impacted.

I am here before you today on behalf of Restorative Justice Institute of Maine to testify in full support of LD 178, and the effort to re-establish parole in Maine.

As an organization that works with building community relationships, and reducing harm, we believe that no human should be disposable. Most people inside Maine's prison system are there for a lack of judgment in the moment, survival, past trauma, and/or suffer with Substance Use Disorder.

Maine presents their prison system as a place to rehabilitate, rather than punishment. They speak about this with pride. If this was in fact the case, and they really believed in the incarcerated citizens' future, we wouldn't have to be here today. This would have already been done years ago.

Parole is a good thing. Not only for the ones experiencing incarceration, but for communities as a whole. Parole reinforces the offender to be rehabilitated and allows for healing, and addressing the harm that was caused.

I know many people that are out on parole in other parts of the United States. They are more than their mistakes, they are civil engineers, scientists, tutors, business owners, home owners, and much more. Most importantly, they are kind, compassionate, human beings that work everyday to repair communities in which they have harmed. Parole is nothing to be scared of, if the offender violates, they go back. Similar to probationers.

Inside Maine prisons, there are people serving multiple year sentences. They are the most amazing people that I have ever met. They have worked hard to right their wrongs. They attend college, or have already earned degrees. They are mothers, fathers, sisters, brothers, grandparents, mentors and someone's child.

I guess my question is, What is Maine scared of?

The only way to create positive change is trying new things and stepping out of your comfort zone. So, I am asking Maine to step out of their comfort zone and try something that works by passing LD#178. Everyone deserves a second chance.

Thank you,  
RJIM