



**Maine Hospice Council and Center for End of Life Care**  
*Where Change Happens*

**Testimony on Behalf of LD 178  
before  
Criminal Justice and Public Safety Committee  
Presented by  
Kandyce Powell MSN**

**Monday, March 13, 2023  
10:AM**

**Good afternoon, Senator Anne Beebe-Center, Representative Suzanne Salisbury and members of the Criminal Justice and Public Safety Committee. My name is Kandyce Powell. I am a resident of Wiscasset as well as the Executive Director of the Maine Hospice Council. I am pleased to be with you today to speak in support of LD 178, “An Act to Support Reentry and Reintegration into the Community”.**

**We can’t incarcerate our way to a healthy country. It hasn’t worked. The issue is a societal one and each one of us bears some responsibility. All of us have a role. I remember driving by the old prison in Thomaston years ago, saying to myself, “I wonder who lives there?”**

**In 1999, I found out. The Maine hospice Council proposed a hospice program at the Maine State Prison. For 18 years, we worked with DOC, prison administration and the men who were incarcerated to develop and nurture one of the most comprehensive hospice and palliative care programs in the country.**

**The ground rules, when I began training the men to become hospice volunteers, was that of shared humanity. A program of respect, trust, altruistic care-giving, skill building, and collaborative problem-solving. The men in my classes were some of the most intelligent, talented, respectful and kind I have been privileged to work alongside, and I have been in healthcare for 50 years. The program gave them hope. It helped them tease out the very best of themselves. Watching the men at the bedside of a seriously ill or dying patient would bring tears to your eyes. I was immensely proud of the tenderness they were not afraid to share.**

**In the classroom, the depth of our conversations was amazing. Guests from the community who attended our classes were astounded. Most of the guests were health care professionals, interns, Doctoral students, medical students, psychiatrists, community hospice volunteers, Attorneys General, faculty from international universities, to list but a few. After the conferences, guests would leave saying, “I had no idea.”**

**There is so much more to this story. Truthfully, some of the most profound work I have ever done. We can’t go back and fix what they did or the decisions that led them to prison. They’ll live with that the rest of their lives. However, we can take time to get to know them, to listen to their stories in order to understand the context of their lives as well as the behaviors that led them to prison. We can also create policies and provide accessible resources so everyone has equal access to the help they need.**

**One of the policies we can restore in Maine is parole. You’ve heard the history. Maine had parole, but it was abolished in 1976. Was it, or will it ever be a perfect system? No. Is that a reason not to restore it?**

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No. Maybe, the question should be, why haven't we reintroduced parole? Some individuals, like myself, who have spent many years working with these men, believe, we could create a system of parole in Maine that might just become a shining example of re-entry, reintegration, rehabilitation and hope?

**Thank you for listening.**

**With sincere appreciation,**

**Kandyce Powell**

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